

**2012-2013 LEAP Program Annual Report**

**Office of Undergraduate Studies**

**The University of Utah**



**BFF**

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# Contents

Executive Summary.....	3
LEAP Program Description.....	3
A Program Overview for the Year.....	4
Changes and Developments in LEAP during 2012-13.....	5
1. New Teaching and Administrative Assignments.....	5
2. New Programs and Partnerships.....	6
3. Program Assessment.....	7
4. Peer Advisor Program.....	14
5. Program Activities.....	15
6. Community Engaged Learning.....	17
7. Advising.....	18
8. Mentoring.....	19
9. LEAP’s Library Partnership.....	19
10. Partnership with the Writing Program.....	20
11. LEAP Advisory Boards.....	20
12. Student Recruitment and Program Outreach.....	20
Milestones and Awards.....	21
1. Notable Student Achievements.....	21
2. LEAP Scholarship and Award Recipients 2013.....	22
3. Faculty Activities and Achievements.....	23
4. Program Awards.....	23
5. Conference attendance and presentations.....	24
6. Continuing Education for LEAP Faculty and Peer Advisors.....	24
7. University Service by LEAP Faculty.....	24
8. Financial Support for LEAP.....	25
LEAP Implementation of the AAC&U Essential Learning Objectives.....	25
List of Appendices.....	30

## **Executive Summary**

LEAP had another good year in 2012-13, with healthy student enrollments and solid performances from faculty. It was not without its complications, however, as we saw some turnover in staff, wrestled with how to grow the program, worked on improving curriculum and pedagogy, expanded program assessment, completed the formal program review process, and planned for a potentially disruptive coming year enrollment-wise.

Dr. Burke Sorenson, who took over for Matt Bradley in spring 2012, had to leave his position in LEAP midway through the fall semester. Dr. Belinda Saltiban took over from him, and continued teaching for LEAP in the spring semester. However, she recently accepted a position elsewhere in the university, doing research on and promoting the retention of students of color. We thank her for her service and wish her well in her new endeavors.

LEAP hired a new Engineering LEAP teacher, Dr. Jennifer Seagrave, who will take over Dr. Steve Maisch's E-LEAP classes. (As detailed below, Steve will be moving on to other classes in LEAP.) Welcome Jennifer! She comes to us with a great deal of experience gained while working as a graduate student with the CLEAR program in the College of Engineering. She just recently finished her Ph.D. dissertation in English.

LEAP faculty this year sought to improve pedagogy and curriculum by preparing to include Reacting to the Past (RTTP) games in LEAP classes, starting in 2013-14. Dr. Ann Engar introduced this high impact approach to LEAP two years ago. A recent University Teaching Committee grant award funded travel for five teachers to the RTTP conference in New York in June 2013. Additionally, LEAP faculty, cognizant that diversity education is one of the most potent experiences available for first year students, began the process of re-examining their approach to teaching diversity this year, a process that will continue into next year.

Assessment of the program (detailed below) expanded significantly this year with a grant-funded class on social research. The focus of this class was the LEAP experience. Ten students interviewed 30 current LEAP students. This was supplemented by a survey completed by all students. This mixed methods research constitutes the most exhaustive assessment yet of the Program's unique impact on students.

Finally, we completed the Formal Program Review, begun in the fall of 2011, in May of this year! LEAP was highly commended by all reviewers. The Memo of Understanding resulting from the review is included in an appendix to this document.

## **LEAP Program Description**

LEAP is a year-long learning community for entering University students. It consists of two three-credit-hour courses – one fall semester, one spring semester – taken with the same professor and classmates, allowing students to build community. LEAP's two classes

typically fulfill the University's diversity requirement and two general education requirements (one in social science and one in the humanities, although Health LEAPs fulfill two humanities requirements and the diversity requirement) and are linked to optional classes in writing, library research, and major selection. Community Engagement Learning credit is offered in many sections of LEAP.

LEAP's mission is three-fold:

1. To promote and implement scholarship and service for first-year students through an integrated, interdisciplinary, and collaborative teaching and learning community;
2. To attract and retain a diverse student population; and
3. To engage students in an interactive exploration of diversity issues both in the classroom and through community outreach.

## **A Program Overview for the Year**

Counting enrollments is always tricky, since class numbers continue to fluctuate through the year. For the purposes of the following overview, data was obtained from the Registrar and represents the number of students who remained enrolled through each semester. By this measure, the program enrolled 918 first year students in the fall. (These enrollment numbers all include Architecture LEAP, which has been suspended for the 2013-14 academic year.) Eighty-five students were in the classes beyond the first year of the multiyear LEAP programs: Health Science LEAP and Pre-law LEAP. Fall-spring retention was again strong. Of the 918 first-year students who began in the fall, 712 students, or 80%, were enrolled for the spring semester. LEAP offered 34 sections this year for first year students during fall semester and 32 sections in the spring semester (including Architecture). One section of Engineering LEAP and the one section of Veterans' LEAP were cancelled in the spring due to lack of enrollment.

- Fall Semester 2012. LEAP offered 16 sections of 1101 for 369 students, 8 sections of 1100 for 232 students, and 1 section of Architecture & Planning 1610 for 30 students. Of these 1101 sections, 4 were Exploration LEAP, 3 were Business LEAP, 3 were Service Learning LEAP, 2 were Residence Halls LEAP, 1 was Education LEAP, 1 was Science LEAP, and 1 was Veterans LEAP. There were 9 E-LEAP courses offered for 274 students. Among the LEAP 1100 sections, 2 were Fine Arts LEAP, 3 were College of Health LEAP, 1 was Health Sciences LEAP (first year), one was Pre-Law LEAP (first year) and 1 International LEAP.
- Spring Semester 2013. LEAP offered 15 sections of 1100 for 292 students (Veterans LEAP was cancelled due to lack of enrollment), 4 sections of 2004 (the second semester of College of Health and Health Sciences LEAP) for 101 students, 2 sections of 1101 (the second semester of Fine Arts LEAP) for 39 students, 1 section of Architecture & Planning 1611 (Architecture LEAP) for 35 students, 1 section of 1150 (the second semester of Pre-Law LEAP) for 15 students, and 8 sections of 1500 (the second semester of ELEAP) for 215 students. 707 students were enrolled in total in these courses (as compared with 663 in spring 2012).

In addition, LEAP offered the following courses:

- LEAP 1050: Major Selection, a course taught in the spring by University College Advisors, for 14 students in 3 sections.
- LEAP 2002: Peer Advisor Seminar elected for credit by 14 Peer Advisors.
- LEAP 2003: Service Learning for Peer Advisors (spring semester only) for 5 students.
- LEAP 1060-001: library research add-on for 250 students.  
LEAP 2050 fall semester for 10 students; LEAP 2055 spring semester for 10 students; and UGS 4810-005 summer semester for 2 students; all on social networking research, with the summer semester used to analyze data collected in the spring regarding the formation of communities in LEAP classes.
- LEAP 2700: second year of Pre-law LEAP (fall semester) for 14 students.
- In the second semester of their second year, Pre-Law students take a logic class from the Philosophy Department (1250, which enrolled 11 LEAP students this year) and have a lab section partially financed by LEAP (LEAP 1251, which enrolled 10 students this year).
- LEAP 3700: third year of Pre-law LEAP (fall semester) for 8 students;
- LEAP 3701: third year of Pre-law LEAP (spring semester) for 6 students.
- UUHSC 2500-001: second year of Health Sciences LEAP (fall semester) for 23 students.
- UUHSC 3000-001 (fall) for 29 students and 3001-001 (spring) for 25 students: third year for Health Sciences LEAP.
- UUHSC 4000-001 (fall) for 11 students and 4001-001 (spring) for 10 students: fourth year for Health Sciences LEAP.

These enrollments are comparable to last year's.

For 2013-2014, we plan to add a Pre-Nursing LEAP and Urban Ecology LEAP for fall semester and to continue the development of an Architecture LEAP for women and other underrepresented students in this discipline. The total number of Explorations LEAP sections will be 2. There will be 2 Living and Learning LEAP (formally Residence Hall LEAP) courses offered, returning to the TH format and working with Housing in providing a floor in Chapel Glen for students enrolled in this class. In all, 31 sections of LEAP will be offered to new students.

## **Changes and Developments in LEAP during 2012-13**

### **1. New Teaching and Administrative Assignments**

Steve Maisch taught the new Science LEAP and Burke Sorenson taught the Veterans LEAP during first semester. Over the course of last year, it was decided that Carolan Ownby's ongoing work with the Peer Advisors needed to be recognized by officially naming her Assistant Director of LEAP with specific responsibility for the Peer Advisor program.

LEAP has hired Jennifer Seagrave, Ph.D. to join our faculty as an Engineering LEAP instructor, starting in the fall of 2013. Also in the fall of 2013, Steve Maisch will no longer teach Engineering LEAP, but will teach one section of College of Health LEAP and one section of Science LEAP. He will also be working through the year on developing an Athletes' LEAP to be first offered in the fall of 2014. Meanwhile, Jeff Webb will drop to two sections of College of Health LEAP, but will be teaching the new Pre-Nursing LEAP as a separate cohort beginning in the fall of 2013.

The role of Nora Wood has expanded considerably as she turns Residence Halls LEAP into Living and Learning LEAP, with students sharing a floor in Chapel Glen as well as taking one section of LEAP together.

Dr. Belinda Saltiban took over from Burke Sorenson during fall semester 2012 and taught again in spring semester, but will be moving to a different position within the University for the 2013-14 academic year.

Dr. Margaret Harper oversaw the Phi Eta Sigma freshman honorary society and planned and implemented a major national conference in her first year as faculty advisor.

## **2. New Programs and Partnerships**

LEAP maintained or added partnerships with the Horizonte ESL Program, Guuleysi, Highland High ESL Program, West High School, Crossroads Urban Center, University Neighborhood Partners, Jackson, Riley and Mountain View Elementary Schools, Washington Elementary, Hser Ner Moo Center, International Rescue Committee, Bryant Middle School, the Patient Experience Project at the University Hospital, and the AMES School, as well as various departments and entities across campus.

A partnership with the College of Nursing was added, to support a one-semester second-year experience for pre-nursing students. These students will initially be drawn from Health Sciences and College of Health LEAPs, but beginning in the fall of 2013, they will be separately recruited and form their own cohort from the first year.

Residence Halls LEAP will become Living and Learning LEAP beginning in the fall of 2013. Students taking LEAP 1101, sections 14 or 15, will also be sharing a floor in Chapel Glen. Peer Advisors for these classes will live on the floor as well, as will a LEAP alum who's been named the RA for this community.

A new Science LEAP was launched, for majors in biology, chemistry, physics, or math, and experienced great success in its first offering.

Jeff Webb and Caren Frost taught a three-semester (fall, spring, and summer) course in social research for 10 advanced LEAP students. The fall semester class covered topics in social network analysis and education, and involved students in designing qualitative research to be carried out during the spring semester. During spring semester students interviewed 30 LEAP students from across the program. Additionally surveys were administered to all LEAP students. During the summer

semester, two students, Amanda Kinniburgh and (former PA) Tanner Aste, are working with Jeff and Caren to write two journal articles presenting the research.

Writing 1060, the one-credit class that allows LEAP students to earn credit for the work they do in the library, became LEAP 1060. As of its offering in spring 2014, all SCH for this course will go to UGS. In the spring of 2013, it enrolled some 250 students.

Also during this year, plans were put in place to change the Writing courses offered to LEAP students starting in the fall of 2013:

- Five sections of Writing 2011 will be offered, limited to LEAP students, but fulfilling the same requirements as does Writing 2010.
- Three sections of Writing 1011 will be offered, limited to LEAP students, but fulfilling the same requirements as does Writing 1010.

During the spring semester of 2014, LEAP students will be offered:

- Five sections of Writing 2011
- One section of Writing 1011

This arrangement will allow students who took Writing 1011 in the fall, as well as students who did not get into a writing class but qualified for Writing 2010, to take LEAP Writing 2011 in the spring.

### **3. Program Assessment**

Assessment of the program expanded significantly this year with the grant-funded class on social research described above. This section details this research effort as well as other assessment projects.

#### ***1. The Social Research Class***

The focus of this class was the LEAP experience, and particularly the development of friendship and acquaintance ties among LEAP students. Ten students in the class interviewed 30 current LEAP students. This qualitative data collection was supplemented by a survey completed by all students. This mixed methods research constitutes the most exhaustive assessment yet of the Program's unique impact on students. Currently Dr. Caren Frost and Dr. Jeff Webb are working with two students, Amanda Kinniburgh and (former PA) Tanner Aste, to write two journal articles presenting the research. The summer semester was an optional part of the research class.

The first article is qualitative, exploring the interview results from the spring semester's research. This will be a shorter article submitted to the *Journal of College Student Development*, for their *Research in Brief* section.

The second article currently planned will be a mixed methods piece combining the qualitative findings with the quantitative results from the survey. These results include, most notably, social network data on LEAP classes.

## **2. *The EBI Report***

For the past three years, LEAP has been administering a survey to spring semester students designed by Educational Benchmarking Incorporated (EBI). The 2013 survey results are not yet ready for analysis. Thus, LEAP's EBI report this year focused on the most recent available survey, from 2012. The report is reproduced in full here:

### **Executive Summary**

LEAP compares very well with first year programs at peer institutions (see Figure 1). Nevertheless, the EBI report identified four key "factors" impacting overall LEAP course effectiveness, leading to the following recommendations:

- Continue urging students to involve themselves on campus.
- Continue to work on engaging men in LEAP. One promising direction is the future inclusion of Reacting to the Past games in LEAP.
- Urge students to study more by explicitly setting expectations and having peer advisors organize study groups.
- Encourage high performing teachers to share best practices with LEAP faculty.

### **How we use the EBI report**

One of the challenges in using this instrument is to tame its detail and complexity. The EBI reporting format is designed to help with this task, organizing the 80+ questions into 13 "factors" (summarizing clusters of related questions), which are then assessed statistically for their impact on course effectiveness. Some factors have no impact, and can be ignored for purposes of program improvement. There were 9 of these. The report identifies the factors that do have an impact. There were 4 of these:

- Usefulness of course readings;
- Course improved connections with peers;
- Course improved critical thinking;
- Course included engaging pedagogy.

In order to improve LEAP, according to the report, we should focus on improving these high impact factors. It is also possible to explore these factors by cross-tabbing with categorical answers like gender or race or time spent studying. This cross-tab feature allows us to explore the factors of interest and consider which student populations are statistically underperforming and which, if we could help them improve, would therefore have the biggest impact on our course effectiveness.



## Improving course effectiveness: Recommendations

It should be noted that the EBI report benchmarks the performance of LEAP against peer institutions with first year programs. For each of the above factors, LEAP performs quite well in comparison to similar programs elsewhere. (See Figure 1, which depicts this comparison for our top predictor, the usefulness of course readings; Figure 2 summarizes the other predictors.)

These factors should thus not be understood as weaknesses but (perhaps with the exception of connections to peers) as strengths, which nevertheless would have the biggest impact on overall course effectiveness were they improved.

How do we improve these factors and thereby impact overall course effectiveness? How, for example, can we do a better job of choosing effective course readings or teaching critical thinking? Clearly one of the reasons we already do such a good job with these factors is that teachers are continually focusing on improving their courses. They are already doing their utmost to teach critical thinking, to build classroom community, to choose effective readings, and to teach engagingly. In terms of improving, in other words, there's not much low-hanging fruit.

This is where the EBI report can offer further help by identifying which sub-populations within LEAP find our courses less effective. As we investigate the categorical predictors of the four factors listed above we find certain patterns. Here are the attributes of the students who most benefit from LEAP.

- *They do not live on campus.* LEAP served non-residential and commuting students well. These students rate the usefulness of the course readings, the establishment of connections with peers, and LEAP's engaging pedagogy more highly than do residential students.
- *They are involved on campus.* Students who were involved on campus (have 2 or more extracurricular activities) got more out of the LEAP course socially and intellectually.
- *They are women.* Women reported gaining more intellectually and socially from LEAP than men did.
- *They study more than 11 hours per week.* The more students studied, the more they got out of LEAP.

Figure 1: Benchmark of LEAP against other Institutions: the top predictor

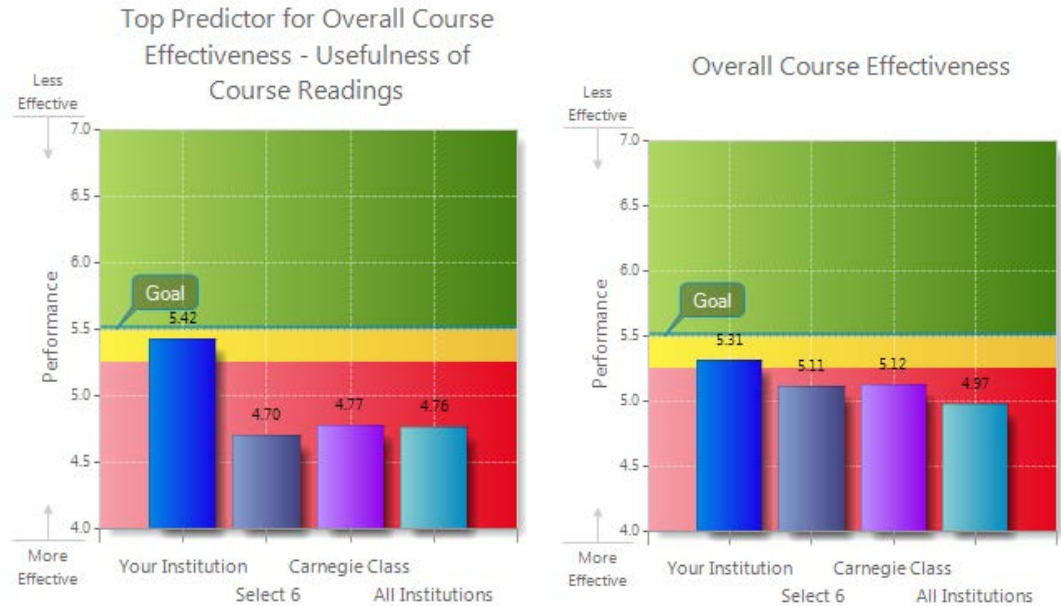
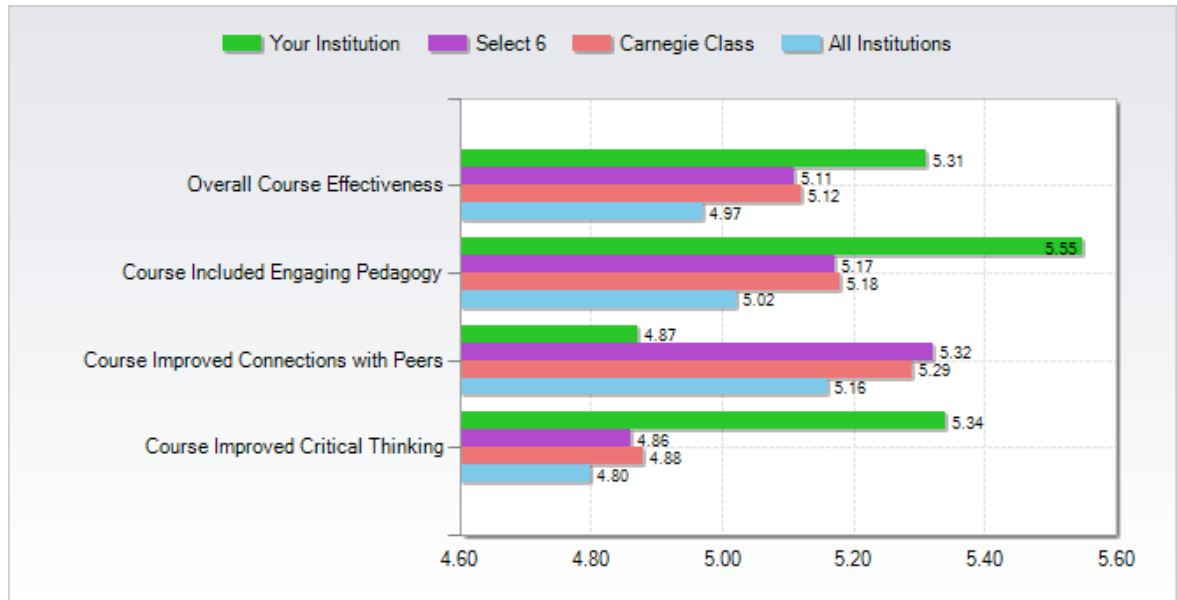
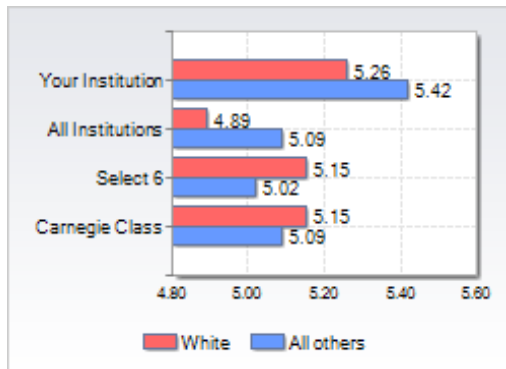


Figure 2: Benchmark of LEAP against other Institution: the other predictors



Two of these predictors, gender and time spent studying, were apparent in the 2011 report as well. It is worth noting that, as in the earlier report as well, race/ethnicity was not a predictor of course effectiveness. Students of color were generally more satisfied with LEAP courses than were white students (see Figure 3), though the difference was not statistically significant. (This was not true of our “select six” comparison institutions, where white students were more satisfied than students of color.)

Figure 3: Course effectiveness by race/ethnicity



### What improvements can be recommended based on these associations?

- Residential status.* It is surprising that non-residential students rate LEAP more highly in these dimensions than do residence hall students (usually it is the other way around, residence being a consistently strong predictor of academic performance). It may be that non-residential students are getting something crucial from LEAP—a feeling of connectedness to the campus community?—that they are not getting elsewhere. Thus, LEAP may in this case be addressing a deficit.

Nonetheless, it might well be possible to improve the LEAP experience for residential students. The new Living and Learning LEAP, debuting in the fall of 2013, will have the students that are taking one of the two residence hall LEAP sections living together as well on a floor in Chapel Glen. In addition to their Peer Advisors (who will also live on the floor), they will have a resident RA and a budget for special activities provided by Housing and Residential Education. This may well improve their bonding as a community and their perception that the LEAP program is working for them as well as it does for commuting students.

- Extracurricular involvement.* Lots of research shows that campus engagement is associated with academic performance. This survey result is consistent with that research and supports LEAP’s constant encouragement of students to get involved. Our recommendation is to continue doing what we’re doing: having Peer Advisors make announcements about campus events, organizing LEAP-wide social events, and giving extra credit for campus involvement.
- Gender.* We’ve been aware for a while that women seem to thrive in LEAP to a greater extent than men do. While such gender differences in academic performance are part of a national trend, LEAP can nevertheless continue to work on the challenge of engaging men. One promising direction in this regard is Reacting to the Past, a multi-week role-playing game that some teachers are beginning to use. We just won a grant to support implementation of Reacting to the Past. We recommend that LEAP continue working in this direction.

Including Reacting to the Past games would, incidentally, also help us address the one factor where we underperformed our peers: course improved connections with peers. These games are intensely interactive and seem to create vibrant student networks in classes.

- *Time spent studying.* Not surprisingly, students who study more in LEAP get more out of the course. We recommend that LEAP teachers reiterate to students their expectations of time spent studying, and that peer advisors actively arrange and solicit involvement in study groups. Often students in LEAP are taking courses together outside of LEAP. Peer advisors could arrange study sessions for these classes as well. More consistent mechanisms for tracking student preparation for classes, such as regular reading quizzes may also be called for.

There is a great deal more detail in the EBI report than has been covered here. There is, in particular, a lot of potentially useful detail at the section level. Each year, some sections—and by implication some teachers—are outperforming the others. One possibility for using this information would be to identify the LEAP teachers who consistently score most highly on these critical factors and to interview them about what they do. Which techniques or approaches are producing their results? Do they have best practices that could be shared with the rest of the faculty?

### **3. Study of LEAP's Impact on Retention/Graduation**

During the fall semester of 2012, Dr. Jeff Webb completed a major study of the predictors of Retention and Graduation at the University of Utah. This study helped identify LEAP's differential effect on student graduation rates. Key portions of that report are reproduced here and full report is included among the appendices:

#### **Discussion**

The primary objective of this study was to use event history analysis to investigate the impact of first-year learning community participation on graduation at the University of Utah and, in particular, to re-examine positive findings from an earlier study on the same topic. The secondary objective was methodological: to compare the cause-specific hazards model of graduation (implemented in the R package "survival") with a competing risks model that simultaneously considers drops (implemented in "cmprsk") in order to find out whether the latter model, while theoretically more accurate than the former model, is different enough in practice to warrant its continued use.

We found that LEAP participation did increase the probability of graduation. Moreover, the competing risks analysis in "cmprsk" produced a much higher estimate of the hazard ratio associated with LEAP participation than the analysis in "survival": 1.181 versus 1.1. We conclude that the competing risks model is the superior approach in this context. Not only is it sounder theoretically, but the precision it adds to the LEAP coefficient makes a difference practically.

What does 1.181 represent? The hazard ratio is a way of conceptualizing differences in probability—in this case between LEAP and non-LEAP as predictors of graduation—in percentage terms, against a baseline of 1.0 indicates no difference in probability. 1.181 thus means that LEAP students have an 18.1 percent greater average probability of graduating at any given time, compared to non-LEAP students. To get a full picture of graduation outcomes, however, it is also necessary to note the proportion of students who actually end up graduating, irrespective of their pace. At 6 years the difference between LEAP and non-LEAP was 5 percent (60 percent versus 55 percent, as can be seen in Figure 2 in the Appendix), which, hypothetically speaking, means that an additional 71 LEAP students graduated at the 6 year mark who otherwise would not have (LEAP  $n = 1434$ ). This difference between LEAP and non-LEAP was substantially larger in the case of average and lower admissions index students. The first two panels in Figure 3 (in the Appendix) showed a difference at 6 years of 9 and 10 percent respectively, differences that continued to expand to the end of the study.

Honors participation also increased the probability of graduation in the competing risks analysis, but not by as much as LEAP participation did. It is difficult to explain this difference. One possibility is that the effects of first year academic and social experiences, whether occurring in LEAP or Honors, diminish as the academic ability and preparation of the student increases. After all, we saw a larger effect of LEAP on lower admissions index students (see Figure 3 in the Appendix). Perhaps the same dynamic is operating for Honors students. For these well-prepared and high-performing students transitional programs may not be necessary for academic achievement: they will do well wherever they find themselves. Another possibility is that Honors, during the years of this study, was not, properly speaking, a learning community. Students would have ended up taking classes together, but more by accident than design, and not as part of the same cohort. (Honors has since created several learning communities for first-year students.) This difference in program configuration could explain the difference between LEAP and Honors. Astin argues that peer relationships of the sort developed in learning communities constitute “the single most potent source of influence on growth and development during the undergraduate years” (1993a, p. 398). First-year programs like learning communities harness what he calls “the power of the peer group” to spark engagement and learning” (Astin, 1993b, p. 4). The present study suggests that this effect may also be indirectly discernible in graduation outcomes.

Strikingly, the ethnicity variable was not significant. One of the motivations for this study was the suspicion that low numbers of matches reduced power in earlier study (reported in Bliss et al. [2012] and prevented investigation not only into the effect of ethnicity on graduation, but also into the effect of interactions with ethnicity. That suspicion turned out to be grounded. Ethnicity, after controlling for student background, was not significant, nor were any interactions with ethnicity. (As noted above under “Variables,” different ways of constructing this variable had no effect on its significance.)

The sex variable obviously had a large impact on graduation for students in this sample. This impact was perhaps most visible in the interaction between sex and age

(Figure 4 in the Appendix), which indicated that women graduated more quickly when matriculating below age 20 than they did when matriculating after age 20, with a dramatically higher proportion eventually graduating. Men graduated more quickly when matriculating at age 20 or older. There may be a policy recommendation indicated here: incentives for women to matriculate before age 20 would likely result in dramatic improvements in their graduation rates, whereas men should be encouraged to matriculate at 20 or older.

The extent to which the effects of sex—both main effects and interactions—is due to the local culture is unknown. It would be instructive to compare graduation rates by sex at the University of Utah with those at other universities.

#### 4. Peer Advisor Program

See the Annual Report for AY 2005-2006 for a description of the Peer Advisor Program. ([http://www.leap.utah.edu/media/leap\\_05-06\\_report.pdf](http://www.leap.utah.edu/media/leap_05-06_report.pdf))

The Peer Advisor program had another very successful year under Dr. Carolan Ownby's leadership. This year's cohort of Peer Advisors numbered 34: one per LEAP section including a Senior Peer Advisor. They met twice a month as a group. Because there were so many this year, Dr. Ownby split them into two groups, each led by one of two Senior Peer Advisors and meeting on a staggered schedule. While the PA's met every other week, Dr. Ownby thus met with one group every week. Membership in the two groups was scrambled at the semester.



2012-2013 Peer Advisors

## 5. Program Activities

LEAP sponsored the following activities in 2012-13:

- *LEAP Convocation*, August 29, 2012; Speaker: Dr. Martha Bradley, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs.
- *LEAP Faculty Retreat*, August 16, 2012.
- *Peer Advisor Workshop* to prepare the 2012-13 Peer Advisors, August 16 and 17, 2012.
- *Opening Picnic*, Sept. 21, 2012.
- *Glenn Bailey's poverty workshops*, September 5 and 6, 2012.
- During fall 2012 LEAP sold bracelets to benefit Crossroads Urban Center. The bracelets were themed to tie in to the University's theme of Imagine U. This project raised \$973.86.
- *Child Poverty Awareness Week*, October 22-26, 2012.



**Child Poverty Week**

This week-long event is organized annually by Jennifer Bauman's LEAP classes, and this year was held in conjunction with Community Engagement Day, at which LEAP also participated in an event to raise awareness of sexual assault.



### **Campus Wide Community Engagement Day**

Both events were part of the celebration of David Pershing's inauguration as University President on October 25.

- *See You at the U* was held on November 11, 2011. 135 students from Northwest Middle School attended campus events organized by the Peer Advisors.



- For a *spring 2013 Peer Advisor service activity*, we did a two week Penny War for Crossroads and raised \$1261.47. The drive ended on March



- LEAP Paper Chain activity, February 21, 2013, at which students and Peer Advisors joined with other organizations around the state to construct paper chains to represent the 300,000 Utahns who would benefit if Utah opted into the expanded Medicaid plans that are part of the Affordable Care Act.
- Focus groups on the experience of LEAP students in diversity classes, April 3 and 5, 2013.
- *Pre-Law LEAP luncheon, April 5, 2013.*
- *Closing reception for Health Sciences LEAP students, April 10, 2013.*
- *Peer Advisor Luncheon* on April 11, 2013. This occasion involves campus-wide and community partners in honoring our Peer Advisors and celebrating their accomplishments. Peer Advisor Scholarships and the Frost Award for Outstanding Peer Advisor of the Year are presented. The scholarship winners are listed below. See appendix for this year's program.
- *LEAP Scholarship Reception, April 16, 2013.* This is an event honoring scholarship winners. Parents and family are invited. This year's reception was held at the Alumni House.
- *Special faculty meeting* to work on diversity issues with Dr. John Quincy Adams, April 17, 2013.
- *Closing picnic, April 19, 2013.*
- *Fine Arts LEAP Theater production* with the students of Neighborhood House, on April 25, 2013, received money and support from a variety of donors.



- *Presentation and acceptance of the LEAP Memo of Understanding*, the end result of LEAP's formal program review by the Undergraduate Council, to the Academic Senate on May 6.
- *LEAP also took a central role on the Auxiliary Faculty Committee* that this year secured a change in nomenclature recognizing Lecturers as Career-Line faculty, and a provision for their representation on the Academic Senate.

In addition, the LEAP Policy Board met twice (once each semester) and the Mentorship Program (described below) continued to function and grew in size.

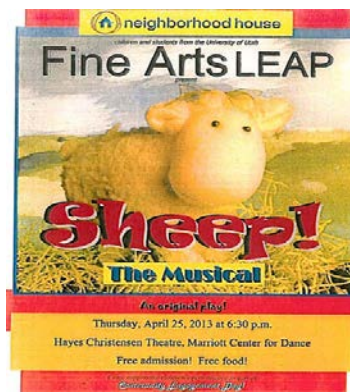
## 6. Community Engaged Learning

Formal community engaged learning opportunities in the LEAP program for which first-year students get academic credit include Dr. Carolan Ownby's Community Engagement LEAP, Dr. Jennifer Bauman's spring semester sections of Fine Arts LEAP, Dr. Ann Engar's third year Pre-Law Leap (LEAP 3700), and both semesters of Dr. Bliss's fourth year Health Sciences class (UUHSC 4000 and 4001). Two other LEAP instructors are applying for Community Engaged Learning designations for classes in the 2013-14 academic year. Here are details on LEAP service during the 2012-13 school year.

*Fine Arts LEAP Service.* Here is a list of the service accomplishments of Dr. Jennifer Bauman's Fine Arts LEAP sections:

- Fine Arts LEAP ran LEAP Child Poverty Awareness Week. The entire effort resulted in over 624 volunteer hours raising \$1,302.17. Dr. Bauman comments: "Many people have now thought about children living in poverty, and I am confident this has had an enormous impact that will touch and change many lives for the better."

- Fine Arts LEAP students created an original musical *Shaun the Sheep* working with students from Neighborhood House (which included original script, music, choreography, costumes, sets, publicity, press releases, fundraising, rehearsing with the children, etc.) . performed at the U of U on April 25, 2013, with a and Mattie Wattis Harris gave children at exposure to and and also confidence and experiences. Each time worked (and played) Neighborhood House, healthy snacks and fun



The production was Marriott Center for Dance grant from The William H. Foundation. This project Neighborhood House experience in the fine arts community-building Fine Arts LEAP students with the children at moreover, they brought prizes.

2013 Fine Arts Play

*Community Engagement LEAP.* Dr. Carolan Ownby's students continued to work with West High ("LEAP to the U"), the Horizonte ESL Program, and Northwest Middle School ("See you at the U"), among other organizations.

LEAP to the U: met with students from West High School a total of six times.

- On Sept 26, we met together for the first time on the U campus and talked about goals for the year. We gave the WHS students the "Asha" challenge to maintain good grades.
- On Nov. 7 we took the WHS students on a campus tour including places like the library, and to a physics demonstration.
- On Nov. 14 we met the WHS students for bowling in the Union.
- On Mar. 6 we held Shadow Day, where each WHS student went with one or more LEAP students to two University classes.
- On Mar. 27, the LEAP students and WHS students joined together to put on Dr. Seuss Day at Washington Elementary School's afterschool program.
- On April 17, the LEAP students met with WHS students at WHS for our final celebration.

The number of LEAP students participating was constant at about 25. The number of WHS students fluctuated.

Students in CEL LEAP also volunteered at Washington Elementary, Horizonte, Hser Ner Moo, IRC, Crossroads Urban Center, and Asian Association. This allowed students to better understand class readings on marginalization, poverty, and "Becoming American".

*Other service:* Dr. Bliss's Health Science students worked with students from Mountain View Elementary School on a project designed to get third graders thinking about careers that would require a college education. Others tutored students identified as candidates for college scholarships while at Bryant Middle School and then moving on to West and East High Schools. A third group worked with Jim Agutter on his study of patient experience at the University Hospital.

Ann Engar's Pre-Law LEAP Community Engagement class has instituted a partnership with the S. J. Quinney Family Law Clinic so that LEAP students are preferred for volunteering in the clinic. Four students, including a LEAP Program graduate who runs the program, served there this year. One student served as an advisor to judges in Peer Court and was offered a full-time position with the program. Two students worked with a state senator in his law office, and one managed the successful re-election campaign of a state senator. Still another volunteered with the ACLU. Over 300 hours of service were completed.

## **7. Advising**

LEAP continued an effective partnership with University College advising this year, with the aim of helping students investigate and choose majors.

- University College advisors visited LEAP classes in October to advise students preparing to register for spring semester. Advising has become mandatory at four points throughout a student's career; the advisor visit to LEAP classes satisfies the first point for LEAP students. This visit also has guaranteed and will continue to guarantee students early registration for spring semester classes. UC Advisors also met with the Peer Advisors prior to visiting with the classes, so that PA's would be better equipped to answer students' questions.
- A one-credit hour class, LEAP 1050, taught by University College Advisors on the process of major selection, was offered again this spring for LEAP students.
- Advisor John Nilsson visited College of Health and Health Science LEAP sections this year to advise students on admissions requirements for various professional schools in Health Sciences.
- Two LEAP teachers -- Dr. Carolyn Bliss and Dr. Jeff Webb -- incorporated the SSI (Student Success Inventory) into their classes in order to give structure to student engagement activities and experiment with an early warning system for students having academic difficulties.
- Other pre-Professional LEAPs, such as Engineering, Business, and Education, also incorporate visits by college advisors.

## **8. Mentoring**

Academic year 2012-13 was the second for the LEAP Mentorship Program, which matches community leaders with LEAP Peer Advisors and LEAP students from the multi-year programs in a two-semester mentoring relationship. This year we recruited more mentors from more professions and matched 34 mentors with 34 students. This represented more than a doubling of last year's figures (15 of each). Students met with their mentors regularly over the six-month program, prepared resumes and personal statements with their mentors' help, and underwent mock job or graduate school interviews with other mentors as a culminating activity. The program will continue this coming year, probably with even more participants.

## **9. LEAP's Library Partnership**

Since 1995, LEAP has partnered with instructional librarians to introduce students to library research strategies and techniques. This partnership continued in 2012-13, with each LEAP section visiting the library for ten instructional sessions over the course of the two semesters. Librarians worked with each LEAP instructor to tailor library sessions to the particular needs of the class. Students who successfully completed eight of the ten exercises assigned at these meetings could earn an extra hour of credit for a course in library research.

The one-credit-hour library class, Writing 1060, has been renamed LEAP 1060. This change went into effect in spring semester of 2013.

## **10. Partnership with the Writing Program**

During fall semester of 2012, the LEAP Program offered its students eight sections of Writing 2010 classes (which fulfill the lower division writing requirement), and during spring 2013, 6 sections of Writing 2010 classes were offered to LEAP students. Although non-LEAP students were allowed to register for places not taken by LEAP students, this partnership allowed students in LEAP courses to take Writing 2010 classes taught by instructors who partnered with the LEAP faculty such that being in one class would assist them to do better in the other.

In addition, Nancy Jensen, the Writing Program Liaison to LEAP and one of the LEAP writing course teachers, offered a series of writing workshops to augment the Writing 2010 curriculum and to offer practical advice on LEAP-related topics to students who weren't yet taking 2010.

During spring semester, a Memo of Understanding was constructed and signed by the LEAP Program Director and the Writing Program Director, specifying the partnership for 2013-14. During this year, a total of 14 sections of LEAP-specific writing classes at both the 2010 and 1010 levels will be offered. Those fulfilling the requirements met by 2010 will be called Writing 2011, and those fulfilling the requirements met by Writing 1010 will be called Writing 1011. The decision to add 1010-level courses was made after research showed that around 1/3 of the year's LEAP students qualified at the Writing 1010 level rather than Writing 2010.

## **11. LEAP Advisory Boards**

The LEAP Policy Board met twice this academic year on October 29, 2012, and on April 22, 2013. See Appendix for minutes from this year's meetings.

Meetings of the LEAP Community Advocacy Board have been suspended as we re-think the membership and role of this body.

Members of both Boards combined to serve as the selection committee for this year's LEAP scholarship recipients.

## **12. Student Recruitment and Program Outreach**

The following is a list of initiatives undertaken this year to improve LEAP enrollment and the awareness of the LEAP Program among students before they come to orientation:

- LEAP participated in every recruitment or outreach effort the University mounted for the year.
- LEAP was also represented at every UAAC meeting, to keep advisors apprised of changes in LEAP.

- Dr. Bliss met with University College Advisors to explain changes in LEAP.
- Dr. Bliss met with the University offices involved in student recruitment.
- Dr. Bliss met with the Office of Orientation regarding changes in the way LEAP would be presented at this year's orientations.
- Dr. Bliss and Ann Darling met with Marla Kennedy and staff to draft a booklet for this year's orientation comparing LEAP and BlockU offerings.
- Dr. Bliss and Liz Taylor, assisted when necessary by Jeff Webb, Stef Aravelo, and Dylan Mace, were present at every orientation, both during the information fairs, and when LEAP and Block U were presented.

For summer orientation of 2012, LEAP engaged four Summer LEAP Advisors to assist with tabling at the Information Fairs held on the second day of every orientation and to help students register for LEAP and LEAP-linked Writing 2010 classes. For summer orientation of 2013, these roles were taken by Orientation Leaders.

## Milestones and Awards

### 1. Notable Student Achievements

Collete Ankenman won the award for this year's Civically Engaged Student and was honored at the Community engagement Luncheon on March 28, 2013.



**Collete Ankenman**

Two former LEAP students – Karely Mann and Alex Au – were featured speakers at the UGS/Student Affairs Directors' Retreat in November of 2012. Karely was also a senior Peer Advisor for the 2012-13 academic year.

Karely Mann and Emily Mangelson produced a freshman handbook (*I Will Survive*) for last year's first-year students. It also formed the basis of a research project presented at the Undergraduate Research Symposium in April of 2013 and will be provided digitally to this year's incoming LEAP students.



**Emily Mangelson and Karely Mann**

A total of 38 LEAP students presented their research at the Undergraduate Research Symposium on April 3, 2013.

Four fourth-year Health Sciences LEAP students were accepted to the Youthline program which delivers international service.

Alexis Jessop was selected to be a Presidential Ambassador for 2013-2014.

Savannah and Emmylou Manwill, former Peer Advisors, were awarded Service Learning certificates this spring by the Bennion Center.

Kelton Johnston, next year's Senior Peer Advisor, received an honors scholarship.

## **2. LEAP Scholarship and Award Recipients 2013**

Approximately \$49,200 was given out in scholarships and awards to:

### **Peer Advisor Scholarships (\$2000)**

Collete Ankenman

Carin Hahn

Isaiah Johnson

Kelton Johnson

David Munoz

### **Frost Award for Outstanding Peer Advisor (\$500)**

Karely Mann

### **Scholars of Promise for LEAP students in or joining the Honors Program (\$2000)**

Elena Nazarenko

William Tang

### **Diversity-Service (\$2000)**

Estefania Arevalo

Haidi Arias

Tanner Aste

Jackie Dailey

Min-Jee Goh

Samuel Ham

Anne Marie Henkels

Esperanza Hernandez

Austin Holmes

Lea Hunter

Kanyana Juliet

Wallie Kanishka

Kenan Karalic

Emily Landon

Jessica Luviano

Wogai Mohmand

**Pre-Law (\$2100)**

Laramie Riggs

**Health Professions (\$2100)**

Chelsea Scutt

**3. Faculty Activities and Achievements**

Carolan Ownby was named a 2013 winner of the Distinguished Teaching Award, and also a Bennion Center Committed Faculty Mentor.



**Carolan Ownby**

Jennifer Bauman and Mike White were nominated for different national service awards.

Jennifer Bauman received a Utah Humanities Council Academic Partnership Award for her work with the Venture Course in the Humanities.

Mike White was promoted to the rank of Associate Professor/Lecturer in both the LEAP Program and the Department of English.

Seetha Veeraghanta had a paper accepted for presentation at a national engineering conference.

Ann Engar received honorary membership in Phi Kappa Phi; her undergraduate university (Stanford) did not have a Phi Kappa Phi chapter. She was also named a Bennion Center Committed Faculty Mentor and a Teaching Fellow of the Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence.

**4. Program Awards**

LEAP has twice been nominated for the Beacon of Excellence Award.

The Program finished its two-year Formal Review with a Memo of Understanding commending LEAP for many of its features and adding significant funding for promotion and faculty development.

LEAP received a \$7000 grant from the University of Utah Teaching Committee, which allowed five LEAP faculty to attend and participate in the Reacting to the Past Institute at Barnard College in June of 2013.

## **5. Conference attendance and presentations**

LEAP was represented and/or presented over the year at the Community Engaged Faculty Institute, the Educated Persons Conference, AAC&U Conferences on Diversity and Assessment, and a number of disciplinary conferences related to LEAP instruction.

A \$7000 grant from the University of Utah Teaching Committee allowed five LEAP faculty to attend and participate in the Reacting to the Past Institute at Barnard College in June of 2013.

## **6. Continuing Education for LEAP Faculty and Peer Advisors**

Dr. Jeff Webb is doing coursework in the Master of Statistics program at the University of Utah. Dr. Bliss continues to represent LEAP at local, regional, and national conferences on undergraduate education and the first-year experience.

All LEAP faculty, in an attempt to become better teachers of diversity curricula and to establish classrooms in which all students feel safe to contribute and participate, have entered into an agreement to hold a series of monthly “Difficult Dialogues” sessions for the entire academic year 2013-14, modeled on those held in Students Affairs and in LEAP’s case, aimed at pedagogy. This will involve and has already required collaboration with the Office of Engagement, the Women’s Resource Center, the Counseling Center, CESA, the Inclusion Center, and other entities.

We also sent two of next year’s Peer Advisors to the Inclusion Summit in July.

## **7. University Service by LEAP Faculty**

LEAP was represented on many campus committees, among them: Undergraduate Council, the Monson Prize Selection Committee, the Undergraduate Research Scholar Designation Committee, UAAC, the Committee for English Writing and Language Support, the ad hoc committee on the role and representation of auxiliary faculty, the Government Relations Committee, the MUSE High Impact Teaching Committee, and the Retention and Assessment Committee. LEAP is also represented on the master Strategic Enrollment Management Committee, and its subcommittees on Students Making an Impact, Mentorship, Orientation and Advising, and Cohort Programs. LEAP faculty were named to three of the UGS Portfolio Teams and also served on several additional search committees during the year and on the committees approving courses for diversity and community engagement learning credit.

Dr. Margaret Harper serves as the University’s advisor for Phi Eta Sigma, a Freshman Honor Society.



Dr. Jennifer Bauman was Library Liaison for LEAP during 2012-13.

## **8. Financial support for LEAP**

LEAP Scholarship funds declined this year, from around \$59,750 last year to \$49,325 this year. Scholarship money was donated by the following organizations/individuals, to which and to whom we are grateful:

- The Lindquist-Moore Family
- Jan and Doug Frost
- Sue Ellis
- Switter Axland
- The Ruth Eleanor Bamberger and John Ernest Bamberger Memorial Foundation (who also support our opening convocation)
- The Undergraduate Studies Board of Advisors
- The Marriner S. Eccles Foundation
- Matt Broadbent
- Goudie Foundation
- Asad Rauf
- John Bennion

Additional funds for faculty development and promotion of the LEAP program are included in the Memo of Understanding resulting from the Formal Program Review concluded in May, 2013, and will support future activities in these fields beginning in the 2013-14 academic year. (See the appendices for the Memo and the final report of the Undergraduate Council ad hoc committee.)

## **LEAP Implementation of the AAC&U Essential Learning Objectives**

If we consider the entire range of the AAC&U Liberal Education and America's Promise Essential Learning Objectives, one or more of LEAP's 15 versions will be seen to address very nearly all of them. Specific examples are indicated below:

### **Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World**

All versions of LEAP fulfill the diversity requirement, so all deal directly with diverse cultures and their histories. Mike White's Exploration LEAP also treats the natural world as a cultural community interacting with that of humans. All LEAPs also have

a humanities component, and most have a social science semester as well. (The health-related LEAPs fulfill two humanities and the diversity requirement.)

### **Intellectual and Practical Skills: Inquiry and Analysis**

All LEAPs demand analysis of materials assigned in class and located in our library sessions. Thus, all LEAPs teach inquiry strategy and analysis of texts.

### **Intellectual and Practical Skills: Critical Thinking**

LEAP classes teach critical and responsive reading and evaluation of the legitimacy of sources, we analyze arguments, and we reinforce a number of writing strategies requiring critical thinking.

### **Intellectual and Practical Skills: Creative Thinking**

LEAP encourages creative thinking by means of assignments in teamwork, class presentations, and debates, which are especially a feature of the health-related LEAPs. Creative thinking – as well as research skills, analysis, critical thinking, and persuasive argumentation – are also a feature of the Reacting to the Past pedagogy, already used in Pre-Law LEAP and International LEAP and about to be implemented in other LEAP classes as well. In addition, Fine Arts LEAP culminates every year in a play that students write, choreograph, compose music for, supply costumes and scenery for, document on film, and perform with Neighborhood House children.

### **Intellectual and Practical Skills: Written Communication**

During the period when the University designated “writing intensive” classes, LEAP classes were always among them. All LEAPs require short written assignments in class, essay exams, out-of-class exams and papers of various length, reflective papers drawn from the students’ life histories or community engagement experiences, research papers, comparison-contrast exercises, and papers demanding synthesis, summary and annotation, and/or argument. We also teach documentation forms and when and how to use them.

### **Intellectual and Practical Skills: Oral Communication**

Most LEAPs require final team presentations to the class of information that has been researched over the semester. Health-related LEAPs end with formal debates in the spring semester. The Reacting to the Past activities require extensive and often extemporaneous oral presentations and arguments by students.

## **Intellectual and Practical Skills: Information Literacy**

All versions of LEAP include a library component during which students work on their final class projects and at the same time acquire competence in using computerized databases and locating sources in the library. There is a visual literacy component to these experiences as well, keyed to the particular version of LEAP so that, for example, Engineering LEAP students get experience in the reading of graphs and other visual presentations of data.

## **Intellectual and Practical Skills: Teamwork**

All LEAPs put students in teams, teach teamwork skills, and require teams to produce regular reports of their progress, to evaluate themselves and each other as team contributors, and to produce final products or presentations as teams.

## **Intellectual and Practical Skills: Problem Solving**

Good teamwork (see above) usually involves problem solving, and many of the class assignments in LEAP are case studies or problem-based. The health-related LEAPs and Engineering LEAP, for example, focus on a number of case studies in one of the semesters. Reacting to the Past pedagogy can also be seen as problem-based, in that students re-enact a crucial period in history and decide for themselves what the outcome of the issue at stake should have been.

## **Personal and Social Responsibility Outcomes: Civic Knowledge and Engagement**

Peer Advisors regularly encourage all LEAP students to become involved on the campus and in the community, and the program offers many service and involvement opportunities. Several versions of LEAP – Community Engagement LEAP, Pre-Law LEAP, Fine Arts LEAP, and Health Sciences LEAP – have specific service and engagement components and requirements. Two additional LEAPs – Urban Ecology LEAP and one of the Exploration LEAPs – have applied for the Community Engagement Learning designation for one of their semesters.

## **Personal and Social Responsibility Outcomes: Intercultural Knowledge and Competence**

All LEAPs fulfill the diversity requirement, so all deal directly with cultural competence and intercultural knowledge. Many do so as well in their social science semester, for example, in Fine Arts LEAP's concentration on the roots of poverty. Often intercultural knowledge is approached in a manner consonant with the overall theme of that version of LEAP. For example, in health-related LEAPs,

students examine and research the health issues of minority populations and how these relate to cultural beliefs and practices and to the history of those populations in America.

### **Personal and Social Responsibility Outcomes: Ethical Reasoning and Action**

Ethics are always involved in discussions of diversity issues, since embrace of diversity is itself an ethical imperative (see above). In addition, Engineering LEAP, College of Health LEAP, Fine Arts LEAP, Pre-Law LEAP, Health Sciences LEAP, Exploration LEAP, and Urban Ecology LEAP all deal explicitly with ethics and the actions that flow from them. Moreover, students participating in community engagement LEAPs and courses that carry CEL credit act in ways that derive from the ethical principles they are studying.

### **Personal and Social Responsibility Outcomes: Foundations and Skills for Lifelong Learning**

As a program designed to help students get off to a good start in college and make a successful transition from high school, LEAP gives them a good foundation for later success and for lifelong learning. We have evidence that LEAP students graduate at higher rates than non-LEAP students, and we believe that a successful college experience is very likely to produce the skills and interest needed to pursue lifelong learning.

### **Integrative Learning: Including Synthesis and Advanced Accomplishment across General and Specialized Studies**

LEAPs are by their very nature interdisciplinary: combining investigations into humanities, social sciences, cultural studies, and the other disciplines addressed within the discipline-specific LEAPs. They require that students apply the epistemology of one discipline to another, and the fact that students experience two semesters under the same faculty member but addressing different bodies of knowledge means that the instructors can explicitly demonstrate the relevance of several epistemologies to a single area of inquiry.

### **Assessment of the Essential Learning Objectives**

No program-wide assessment of how and to what extent ELOs are achieved in LEAP classes has yet been attempted. But a number of efforts specific to certain LEAPs are underway. Jeff Webb has experimented with e-portfolios in College of Health LEAP, Seetha Veeraghanta regularly undertakes review of portfolios of written work in Engineering LEAP (from students in her sections and those of other LEAP instructors teaching E-LEAP), Jeff Webb and Ann Engar are at work on a paper reporting the results of assessing how the implementation of Reacting to the Past

pedagogy affects community formation and other outcomes in Ann's LEAP classes, and a number of us are using or adapting the AAC&U Value Rubrics for assessment of ELO's.

In addition, we continue to collect and examine the results of the Educational Benchmarking Incorporated comparative surveys, this year again supported by a Parent Fund grant.

## **List of Appendices**

1. LEAP Policy Board minutes, fall 2012.
2. LEAP Policy Board minutes, spring 2013.
3. Peer Advisor luncheon program.
4. Report on Retention and Graduation at the University of Utah.
5. Memo of Understanding and final report from the LEAP Formal Program Review.

**Minutes**  
**Meeting of the LEAP Policy Board**

**October 29, 2012**  
**Sill Center Large Conference Room**

In attendance:

Voting members: Sharon Aiken-Wisniewski, Mary Burbank, Robert Flores, Scott Shaefer;  
Non-voting LEAP faculty: Carolyn Bliss, Ann Engar, Carolan Ownby, Nora Wood

Excused:

Voting members: Ann Darling, Milind Deo, Pat Eisenman, Wayne Samuelson, Brent Schneider  
Non-voting chair: Martha Bradley-Evans

Carolyn Bliss, ex officio member of the LEAP Policy Board and Director of the LEAP Program, called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m. and welcomed attendees.

The roster of Board Members and contact information was updated.

There were two principal items of business:

1. To discuss and vote on the promotion of Dr. Michael White to Associate Professor/Lecturer; and
2. To discuss an expanded future role for the LEAP Policy Board.

Two votes were taken on Dr. White: the first determining that he fulfilled the criteria laid out in the LEAP document implementing University Policy 6-310, and the second affirming that Dr. White should be promoted to the rank of Associate Professor/Lecturer under this policy. Both votes were unanimous.

Votes of absentee LEAP Policy Board members were submitted electronically.

The ways in which Dr. White fulfilled promotion criteria will be spelled out in the report to the University Interdisciplinary Teaching Program Committee, which will be forwarded to Policy Board members as soon as it is complete. It goes to the UITP committee on November 12.

Robert Flores noted that the UITP Committee will want to know why Dr. White's initial appointment in LEAP is at the Associate Professor/Lecturer level rather than the Assistant Professor/Lecturer level. The reasons are that this is his sixth year of teaching for LEAP (Associate Instructors may apply for promotion to the Assistant Professor/Lecturer level after teaching three years for LEAP), he already holds an Assistant Professor/Lecturer rank in the Department of English, and the LEAP faculty serving in a non-voting capacity on the LEAP Policy Board believe he deserves appointment at the Associate Professor/Lecturer level. These reasons will be included in the UITP Committee report.

The discussion of an expanded role for the LEAP Policy Board in the future netted the following proposals. The Board might assist in:

- Development of a new LEAP mission statement;
- Advice on re-naming the program to avoid confusion with the AAC&U LEAP initiative;
- Development of closer relationships and perhaps financial connections with departments and colleges partnering with LEAP;
- Dissemination of knowledge of LEAP on and beyond the campus;
- Advice on new versions of LEAP;
- Revision of Policy Board membership recruitment processes, eligibility criteria, representational makeup, and length of service;
- Advice on selecting and mentoring new LEAP faculty;
- Response to the Memo of Understanding that emerges from last year's formal program review.

Sharon Aiken-Wisniewski noted that most of these proposals are included in the synthesis prepared by the ad hoc Undergraduate Council committee of the reports of the internal and external review committees and the response of the LEAP Program Director to those reports.

Carolyn Bliss adjourned the meeting at 2:00 p.m.

Prepared and submitted October 30, 2012, by  
Carolyn Bliss, LEAP Program director



## **Minutes**

### **Meeting of the LEAP Policy Board**

**April 22, 2013**

Attending: Ann Engar, Carolan Ownby, Martha Bradley-Evans, Nora Wood, Ann Darling, Carolyn Bliss, Sharon Aiken-Wisniewski, Pat Eisenman, Liz Taylor, Brent Schneider

Excused: Robert Flores, Mary Burbank, Milind Deo, Wayne Samuelson, Scott Schaefer

The meeting was called to order at 1:15 p.m. by Chairperson Martha Bradley-Evens who welcomed those in attendance and thanked Carolyn Bliss for her work with LEAP.

Carolyn then presented the Memorandum of Understanding that culminates the LEAP Program Undergraduate Council Formal Review process and noted that it will be presented to the Academic Senate as an information item on May 6. A copy of the MOU is included with these minutes, and the highlights of the LEAP response to its agreements are outlined below:

1. Strategic planning: LEAP is working to position itself within a range of learning community options offered by Undergraduate Studies (LEAP, Block U, Block U 2, Honors, etc.) and to see program growth in terms both of new initiatives and of better matching supply and demand. New offerings in development are: A multi-year Architecture LEAP for women and other students underrepresented in architecture; Urban Ecology LEAP (to be offered next fall); Living and Learning LEAP (also offered next fall and adding a residential component to Residence Hall LEAP); Pre-Nursing LEAP (a three-semester program for underrepresented students going into nursing, now on a separate track from Health Sciences LEAP students); an Athletes' LEAP planned for fall 2014; and a LEAP version of Block U 2 (an integrated minor).
2. Re-naming the program: LEAP has ceased to be an acronym and returned to being a metaphor for the leap from high school to college and a leap ahead in general education. The program is now called "LEAP First-Year Learning Communities" and its slogan is "Leap into College."
3. Faculty development: LEAP will now have \$10,000 a year for faculty development. We will start our faculty development this summer by sending as many LEAP faculty as we can to the Reacting to the Past Pedagogy workshop that two of our faculty have already attended. We've applied for a teaching grant to augment the funds allocated in the MOU.
4. Professional marketing: We will have \$5000/year to market the LEAP program to incoming students before they arrive for orientation. We are already working with the U's Marketing Office to put together a packet students will receive before the first

orientation on June 4. The Board suggested that in addition we might establish a Facebook page targeting high school students, and that we might make use of Hobsons CRM to send targeted information on versions of LEAP to students who had expressed certain interests. A LEAP blog is also a possibility.

5. Administrative Recognition of LEAP faculty: We have appointed Jeff Webb, Associate Director of LEAP, as our point person on modifying the FAR template for use by LEAP lecturers. He has already entered into a series of meetings, led by Pat Hanna, regarding this process.
6. LEAP and the integrated minor: LEAP has in development an integrated minor in Community Studies that should be launched in the fall of 2014. Integrated minors are now being referred to as “Block U 2” programs, but retain basically the same shape as envisaged under the integrated minor plan.
7. Diversity: LEAP has already entered into a process of convening focus groups of current and past LEAP students regarding their experience in our diversity classes and using the results to launch a year-long series of Difficult Dialogues meetings for LEAP faculty, modeled on the Difficult Dialogues process undertaken in Student Affairs. Next academic year, we will devote one of our two faculty meetings each month to a Difficult Dialogues session, led by personnel from Student Affairs. We believe that before we begin to assess the impact on students of our diversity classes, we need to arrive at a better understanding among ourselves of why we teach diversity curricula, what such courses should contain, and how to see to it that students feel safe and affirmed in entering honestly and fully into discussions and team assignments in these classes.

Carolyn next covered plans for next year, already outlined above. She also noted that LEAP is in the process of hiring an additional faculty member to teach two sections of Engineering LEAP and has moved one faculty member from Engineering LEAP into College of Health LEAP so that another can teach the new Pre-Nursing LEAP. Pat Eisenman raised the question of what will happen if students in the newly separate Pre-Nursing track want to change to Health Sciences or vice versa. This is something we’ll need to consider; no policy has yet been set.

A general discussion of the role of the LEAP Policy Board followed, with those in attendance expressing general satisfaction with their function as sounding boards for LEAP policy developments and their central role in faculty reviews and promotions. This discussion led to some consideration of an expanded role for the LEAP SAC, which was constituted officially mainly to weigh in on Lectureship appointments and promotions. In addition to this function, it was suggested that the SAC participate in informal annual reviews of Associate Instructors in LEAP. Several Board members mentioned that the review process would be facilitated for

Lecturers by the fact that they will now complete the annual FAR, but it was also noted that SAC participation would allow student input beyond that provided by student evaluations for LEAP teaching personnel even before they applied for Lectureships.

The fall meeting will be held in October.

Participants were thanked for their attendance and their service. The meeting was adjourned at 2:10 p.m.

Submitted by Carolyn Bliss, LEAP Program Director,  
for Liz Taylor, Executive Assistant (on FMLA leave)

### 2012-2013 Peer Advisors

Colette Ankenman	Estefania Arevalo
Tanner Aste	Kira Booth
Andrew Bradbury	Caitlin Branch
Steven Brown	Megan Buelte
Yichen Cheng	Alexis Despain
Ming Gao	Lauren Gonzales
Nancy Granda-Duarte	Carina Hahn
Jetta Harris	Esperanza Hernandez
Hailee Higgins	Ashley Hodgson
Alexis Jessop	Isaiah Johnson
Kelton Johnston	Emily Landon
Jessica Miner	Ester Morley
Jackie Moynihan	David Munoz
Katie O'Neill	Victoria Pozzuoli
Kristine Savage	Stephanie Tello
Caitlyn Tubbs	Sarah Webb

### Senior Peer Advisors

Karely Mann	Laramie Riggs
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### 2013-2014 Peer Advisors

<b>Denise Afable</b>	<b>Sarah Begey</b>
<b>Matias Biese</b>	<b>Jerry Bounsanga</b>
<b>Hunter Brady</b>	<b>Tyler Davies</b>
<b>Brianda De Leon</b>	<b>Erica Fasoli</b>
<b>Abbey Forkus</b>	<b>Abigal Greer</b>
<b>Lea Hunter</b>	<b>Kelley Ingram</b>
<b>Emily Jessop</b>	<b>Christianna Johnson</b>
<b>Heather King</b>	<b>Zachary Klein</b>
<b>Harley-Jane Knudson</b>	<b>Jessica Luviano</b>
<b>Colby Makahilahila</b>	<b>Tara McHugh</b>
<b>Lauren McMillian</b>	<b>Madison Migacz</b>
<b>Jessica Miner</b>	<b>Danica Newman</b>
<b>Spencer Ogden</b>	<b>Elizabeth Radcliffe</b>
<b>Meggie Rodman</b>	<b>Meher Samieneni</b>
<b>Trenton Stapley</b>	<b>Megan Stepanz</b>
<b>Johnny Trang</b>	

### Senior Peer Advisors

<b>Estefania Arevalo</b>	<b>Kelton Johnston</b>
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# Lunch with the LEAP

## Peer Advisors

Thursday, April 11, 2013

Noon – 1:00PM

Panorama East, Olpin Union

## Luncheon Program

This luncheon will highlight the Peer Advisors and also thank those who have made the LEAP Program possible.

## **Welcome**

Dr. Carolyn Bliss  
LEAP Program Director

## **Introduction of Senior Peer Advisors**

Dr. Carolan Ownby  
Assistant Director - Peer Advisors

## **Report from the 2012-13 Peer Advisor Cohort**

Senior Peer Advisors  
Karely Mann and Laramie Riggs

## **Presentation of Peer Advisor Tributes**

Dr. Carolan Ownby

## **Presentation of LEAP Scholarships and Frost Award for outstanding Peer Advisor**

Dr. Patricia Eisenman  
Associate Dean of the College of Health

## **Peer Advisor Mission Statement**

As peer advisors, we understand the potential power and influence that the LEAP program has upon the lives of our students. Therefore, honesty to our students, our professors, and ultimately ourselves is of the utmost importance to the backbone of the LEAP program. It is this understanding that motivates us to serve as a constant example on this campus and leave the LEAP program even better than when we entered. Part of our duty as peer advisors is to be constantly seeking out opportunities for our students, by making more accessible the information that already lies within the University of Utah. The LEAP program is built off of diversity and we will propel a supportive, open, and enjoyable environment for each and every student within the program. It is our mission to lead by Pablo Picasso's quote: "Everything you can imagine is real."

### **Peer Advisor Cohort 2012-2013**



# First-year Learning Communities and College Graduation: A Competing Risks Analysis

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## Abstract

Does participating in a first year learning community affect college retention and graduation? There is limited research on this question, as Pascarella and Terenzini note in their comprehensive survey of educational research, *How College Affects Students, Volume 2: a Third Decade of Research*: “with few exceptions [...] the literature is largely silent of the impact of [learning] communities on student persistence and degree completion” (2005, p. 422). The published studies that do investigate this impact rarely model retention or graduation through time: retention is typically measured after the first year and graduation after 4 or 6 years. But this approach is clearly limited. How, for example, does an institution’s first-to-second year rate of retention compare with the rates in all subsequent semesters? How does the graduation rate at 4 years compare with the rates in other years? Survival analysis, also known as event history analysis, offers a more satisfactory method for modeling these events by treating time as a continuous variable.

The present study used event history analysis to model retention and graduation during a ten year period (1999-2009) for more than 21,000 students at the University of Utah. Approximately 15 percent of these students participated in the LEAP Program, a voluntary learning community for first year students. Though learning communities can be very differently configured, they all emphasize the cohort experience: students take multiple classes together. In the case of LEAP, the same students stay together with the same professor for two semesters.

Does LEAP participation improve student persistence? Previous research indicated that it does (Bliss, St. Andre, & Webb, 2012). However, that research suffered not only from the limitation noted above—the failure to model retention and graduation through time—but also from the fact that the methodology used—matching LEAP and non-LEAP students on a range of background characteristics—constrained the number of students in the study by available matches and made it difficult to discern interactions when just a few students were involved, for example, between LEAP participation and ethnicity. The primary objective of the present study, consequently,

was to use the more powerful tools of event history analysis to confirm and extend the findings of the earlier study on the LEAP Program.

Event history analysis also offers way of accounting for the obvious dependency of graduation rates on retention rates. As DesJardins, Ahlburg, and McCall note,

single outcome (or “single-risk”) models do not take into account the (possible) interdependence between competing outcomes, like stopout and graduation. It is possible, however, to use event history techniques to study these interdependences by using a “competing risks” framework. [...] [E]stimating graduation as a single outcome may be a mis-specification because stopout and graduation may be correlated events. (p. 563)

The secondary objective of this study, then, was methodological: to see how a single outcome model of graduation differs from a competing risks model that simultaneously considers drops. If the difference is negligible, then the competing risks approach, despite theoretically delivering more accurate estimates of coefficients, may not be worth the trouble.

## Methodology

### Analytical Approach

Event history analysis models the time until an event occurs. One complication researchers often face in using this methodology is that the event of interest is not the only possible outcome. In the case of this study, for example, graduation is the event of interest, but dropping out and remaining enrolled are other possible outcomes.

These other outcomes—known as “competing risks”—are typically dealt with through censoring: subjects for whom the competing risk has occurred are removed from the study population. This approach, known as a single-outcome model or cause-specific hazard model, works fine when for any given subject the competing risk events are as likely to occur as the event of interest. In this case the censoring is “independent” or “non-informative” (Kleinbaum, 2005, p. 403). When, however, censoring is informative—when, as in the present study, the independence assumption is violated because, plainly, not all students are equally likely to graduate as to drop out, given their backgrounds—then the estimation of coefficients for the model variables will be biased. The independence assumption, by contrast, would likely not be violated when censoring students still enrolled at the end of the study.

Informative censoring essentially introduces selection bias into the analysis. As long as the censoring mechanism removes subjects whose risks are representative of the study population as a whole, then the censoring is non-informative. It should be noted, though, that this will rarely be the case if censoring is due to the occurrence of a competing risk. Indeed, the independence assumption will be violated whenever the competing risk is an “event whose occurrence either precludes the occurrence of another event under investigation or fundamentally alters the probability of occurrence of this other event” (Gooley, Leisenring, Crowley, & Storer, 1999).

In the present study, as noted, the independence assumption is violated. Not all students are equally likely to graduate, or, more technically: graduation precludes the occurrence of dropping out and vice versa. One alternative to modelling the cause-specific hazard is the competing risks approach first described in Fine and Gray (1999) and implemented in the R package “*cmprsk*” (Gray, 2011). The innovation of Fine and Gray was to model the hazard of the event of interest in the presence of the competing risk. This hazard is known as the hazard of the subdistribution.

Event history risk modelling analyzes the number of subjects for whom the event of interest has occurred relative to the number who remain at risk, known as the risk pool. The difference between the two approaches consists in their definition of the denominator in this ratio: the number who remain at risk. In modelling the cause-specific hazard, subjects who experienced the competing event are censored, removed from the risk pool. In modelling the hazard of the subdistribution, by contrast, subjects who experienced the competing event are not censored but left in the risk pool. The important point here is that this latter hazard calculation takes account of the competing risk. In the case of student persistence, for example, graduation is modeled in the presence of the competing risk of dropping out; those who have dropped out remain in the denominator of the hazard ratio of the subdistribution. (See Lau, Cole, and Gange (2009) for a cogent discussion of the difference between these two approaches to modelling with competing risks.)

## Variables

The dependent variable in this study was graduation. In event history analysis, the dependent variable occurs in time. Thus it was necessary to decide how to measure time-to-graduation. Should it be measured as the total number of semesters since matriculation, including time off? Or should it be measured as only the semesters of actual enrollment since matriculation, excluding time off. We chose the former as the better representation of attendance behavior, and thus of graduation. Consequently the x-axis in the figures included in this article represent total semesters to graduation.

The independent variables included the following:

- *Admissions Index*. A numerical score combining SAT/ACT scores and high school grades, used by the university for admissions decisions.

- *LEAP*. The University of Utah’s first-year learning community. LEAP is a two-semester experience. As detailed below, if students dropped out after one semester, they were not counted as LEAP students.

- *Students of color*. The multilevel ethnicity variable was dichotomized for purposes of analysis after it was determined that no interactions existed for individual ethnicities. Table 3 below shows numbers of students in the sample by ethnicity. An ethnicity variable with three factors (Caucasian, Asian, other students of color) was also tested but was found to be no more predictive of graduation than the dichotomous variable.

- *Male*. Male students were coded 1.



- *Age*. Calculated for each student at the date of first enrollment at the University of Utah and rounded to the nearest year.
- *Cohort*. The year of first enrollment during the years of the study. Only students who started between 1999 and 2009 (inclusive) were part in the study. Table 4 below shows the number of first year students enrolled by year.
- *Honors*. Enrollment in the four-year Honors degree. Unlike LEAP, which is (in most cases) a single year experience open to all students, Honors is a selective four year program with no formal cohort requirement during the period of the study. Honors is included as a variable here primarily to serve as a control for students who were simultaneously enrolled in LEAP and Honors (approximately 1 percent of the sample). This variable indicates only Honors participation: not all students enrolled in the program went on to earn an Honors degree.
- *Income*. Median income in the student’s home zip code.

### Model Specification

The above variables were first used as covariates in a Cox proportional hazards model of graduation implemented in the R package “survival” (Therneau, 2012). The covariates were included to adjust for pre-existing differences between students who did and did not enroll in LEAP in order to eliminate selection bias—as much as this is possible (see “Limitations” below). While including variables like GPA would certainly have improved the fit of this model, grade performance could reasonably be seen as influenced by the variable of interest—LEAP participation. Thus, only covariates that preceded enrollment in LEAP were used in the model. And while not all variables were consistently significant, they were retained in the model because they are theoretically relevant to graduation.

The procedure for model specification was to include all variables—Admissions Index, LEAP, Ethnicity, Sex, Age, Cohort, Honors, Income—in a basic model of the cause-specific hazard of graduating. Cohort was treated as a random variable so as to account for possible differences in graduation according to starting year. In the “survival” package, the function used to specify a random variable is `frailty()`. This improved model fit. But unfortunately the “cmprsk” package does not support multilevel approach. So when it came to preparing final models for comparing the two packages, cohort was treated as a fixed variable.

Next, variable interactions were sequentially tested. There were 10 significant interactions. Each interaction was added to the basic model using a “forward” method of entry: if the interaction improved the model fit according to the likelihood ratio test then it was retained. 8 interactions survived this process.

In order to identify the most robust of these 8 interactions (which is to say the least dependent on the idiosyncrasies of this particular sample), a bootstrapping procedure was used. 100 bootstraps of a random selection of 7500 observations were performed using the model that included the 8 individual variables plus the 8 interactions. For each bootstrap, the p-values for the variables were recorded and placed in

a data frame. The item of interest here was the proportion of times that each interaction turned out to be significant. The threshold chosen for retaining an interaction was .6—that is, an interaction needed to have been significant in 60 percent of the bootstraps to be retained in the model. The interactions that survived the bootstrap procedure were the following: Admissions Index x LEAP, Sex x Age, Admissions Index x Sex, and Admissions Index x Cohort.

The final model thus contained 8 variables and 4 interactions. After centering the variables, this final model was fit in “survival” and in “cmprsk.” Results are discussed below.

### Sample

This study used demographic and enrollment information on 21,500 students who matriculated as first-time students at the University of Utah from 1999 to 2009 (inclusive). See Tables 1-4 for descriptive summaries of the sample.

Table 1

*Descriptive Statistics for Categorical Variables*

Variable	Number	Percentage
Female	10752	50.01
LEAP	3201	14.89
Honors	3137	14.59
Graduated	7543	35.08
Dropped	4040	18.79
Still Enrolled	9917	46.13
Students of Color	3214	14.95

Table 2

*Descriptive Statistics for Continuous Variables*

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Admissions Index	112.29	11.86	73	142
Income	53646	17739	3804	196298
Age	18.51	0.96	14	49

When studying graduation at the University of Utah it is important to avoid inadvertently counting as drops those students who left to serve a 2-year religious mission. There is no formal designation of these students in university records, and they often return to finish their degrees. Thus, students were counted as drops only if they remained continuously unenrolled for longer than four semesters. This definition

Table 3  
*Number of Students by Ethnicity*

Ethnicity	Number of Students
Asian	1553
African-American	230
Caucasian	18286
Hispanic	1206
Multi- or Biracial	13
Native American	151
Pacific Islander	61

Table 4  
*Number of Students by Cohort*

Year of Matriculation	Number of Students
1999	1676
2000	1468
2001	1910
2002	2083
2003	1860
2004	1882
2005	2048
2006	2067
2007	2096
2008	2097
2009	2313

had the effect of creating a rather large number of students—46 percent of the sample (see Table 1)—who, at the end of the study, were counted as still enrolled. These students were censored.

Furthermore, because LEAP is a two semester experience, students were not listed as LEAP students unless they had completed a full year in the program. (Many do not: attrition after the first semester is usually around 30 percent.) By definition, then, all LEAP students completed the first year of college. In order to make the comparison with non-LEAP students fair, non-LEAP students who dropped after the first semester were removed from the dataset. Consequently, there are no drops in this study for LEAP or non-LEAP students after the first semester.

### Results

The results of the Cox proportional hazards regressions implemented in “survival” and “cmprsk” are summarized in Figures 1-4.

The hazard ratio (HR) in Figure 1 can be interpreted as the increased or reduced probability in percentage terms of an event occurring, with 1 as the baseline. In the context of graduation, hazard ratios greater than 1 are desirable.

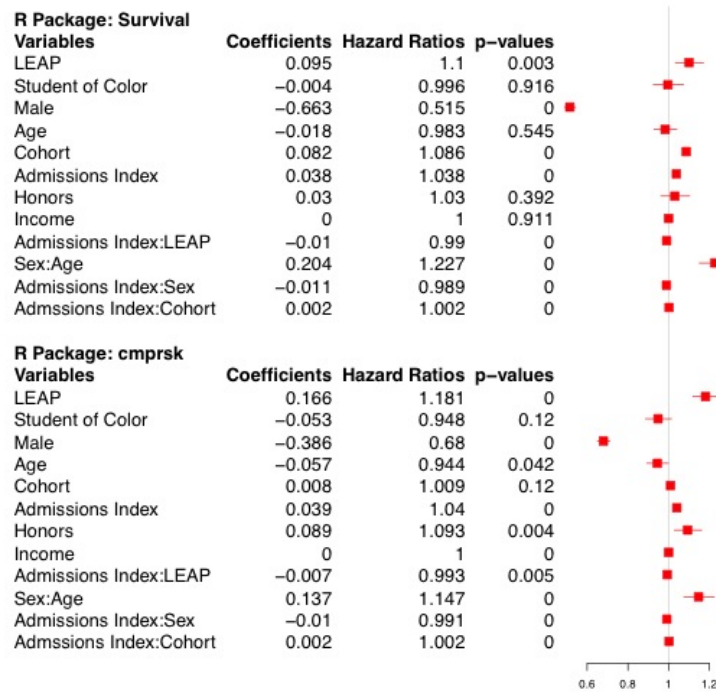


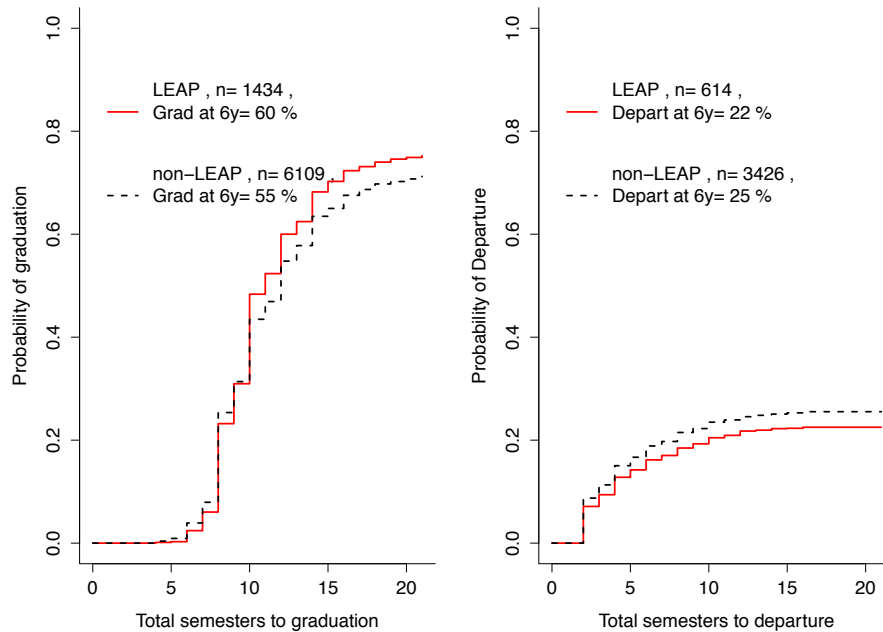
Figure 1. Summary of variable coefficients, hazard ratios and p-values for the same model fitted in two R packages: “survival” and “cmprsk.” Hazard ratios with confidence intervals are plotted on the right. The hazard ratio can be interpreted as the increased or reduced probability in percentage terms of an event occurring, with 1 as the baseline. Variables whose hazard ratio confidence intervals overlap 1 are not significant.

In general, the competing risks approach seemed to moderate the more extreme coefficients returned by “survival,” while enhancing others. Specifically, as can be seen in Figure 1, the competing risks approach:

- Lessened the impact of sex and the interaction of age and sex.
- Increased the impact of participating in Honors and LEAP.
- Lessened the impact of the year of matriculation (cohort).
- Increased the impact of age at matriculation.

Furthermore, the models disagreed about whether age and Honors participation

predicted graduation but agreed that being a student of color and having a higher income did not make a difference.



*Figure 2.* Cumulative incidence curves for graduation and departure at the University of Utah, 1999-2009. These plots show the main effect of LEAP participation on graduation and dropping out in a competing risks analysis. Gray's Test indicated a significant difference between the curves in these panels.

Confining our observations to the competing risks analysis, we see that after adjusting for differences in background and preparation, the strongest predictors of graduation included:

*Being in LEAP or Honors.* LEAP participation increased the probability of graduating by 18.1 percent ( $HR = 1.181$ ), while Honors participation increased it by 9.3 percent ( $HR = 1.093$ ).

*Having a higher admissions index.* A 1 percent increase in admissions index raised the probability of graduation by 4 percent ( $HR = 1.04$ ). This can be seen in the differences between the panels in Figure 3: as admissions index went up, so did the final proportion of students graduating. Moreover, the largest increase in the probability of graduating came progressively earlier in each of the three panels. Students with the lowest admissions index scores tended to graduate at the highest rates at 10 semesters or 5 years. The curve shifted to the left for those with the highest admissions indexes: the highest rate for this group came at 4 years. Further, the relationship between the rates at 4 and 5 years reversed as admissions index

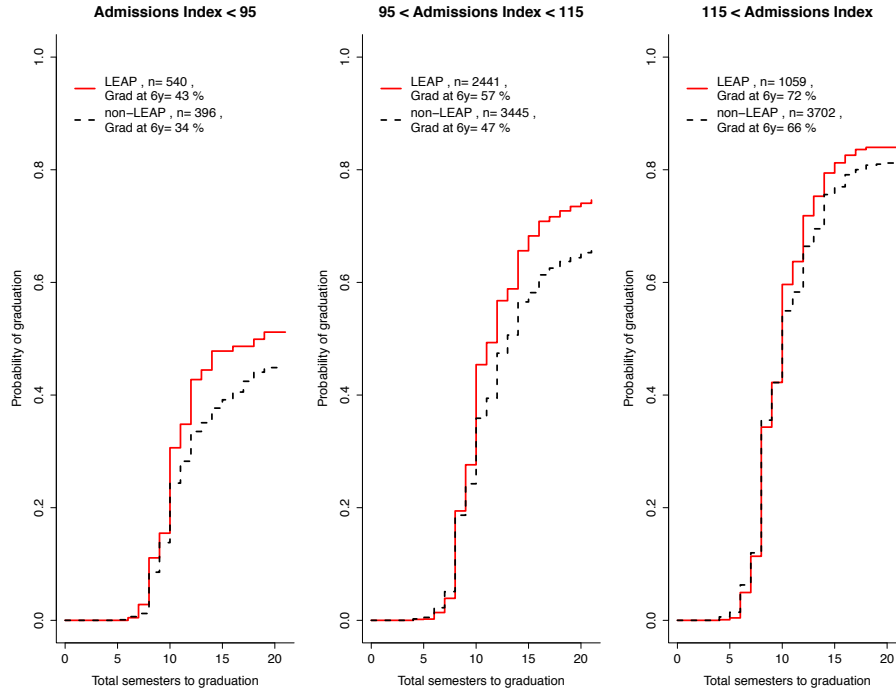


Figure 3. Cumulative incidence curves for graduation at the University of Utah, 1999-2009. These plots show the interaction between LEAP participation and Admissions Index in a competing risks analysis. The interaction is visible in the difference between the first two subsets, low and average admissions index, and the third subset. The main effects of LEAP and Admissions Index are also clearly apparent. Gray’s test indicated a significant difference between LEAP and non-LEAP in each of the three panels.

increases. The highest rate of graduation in the first panel, as noted, came at 5 years, followed by 4 years, whereas in the third panel it came at 4 years, followed by 5 years. However, the impact of admissions index was moderated by LEAP participation, as indicated by the interaction between these two variables.

*Having a lower admissions index but participating in LEAP.* The coefficient for this interaction was  $-.007$ . This can be interpreted to mean that each additional point in admissions index reduced the coefficient for LEAP by  $.007$ . The higher the admissions index, that is, the less of a difference LEAP participation made for graduation. This interaction is visible in Figure 3. The difference between LEAP and non-LEAP in each of the panels was significant according to Gray’s Test (a univariate significance test included in “cmprsk”). But the difference became increasingly attenuated as admissions index increased. Furthermore, in the first two panels, LEAP students outpaced non-LEAP at the steepest points in the curves, at 5 years. In the third panel, there was no difference between LEAP and non-LEAP at 4 years, the steep-

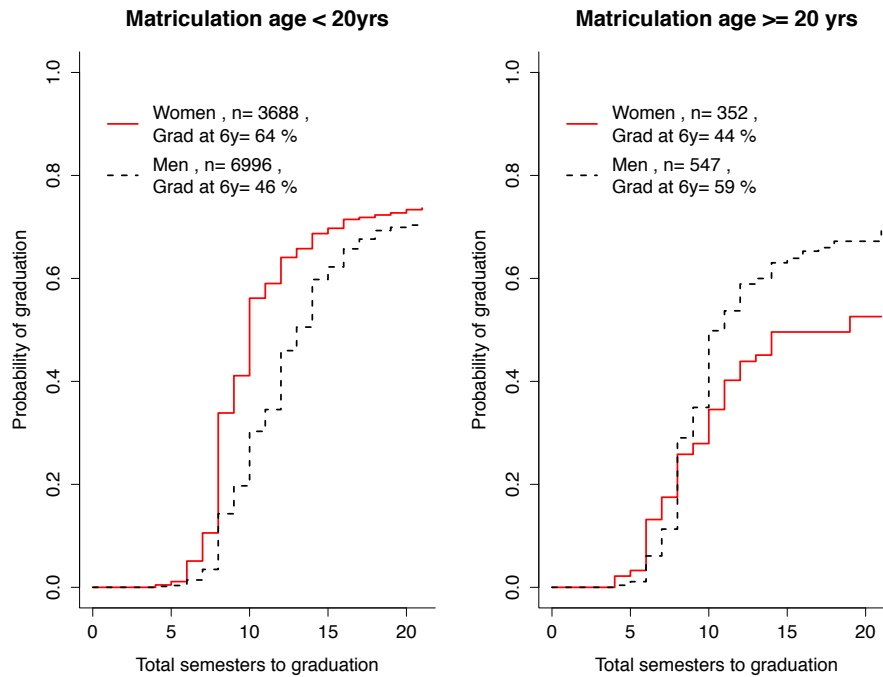


Figure 4. Cumulative incidence curves for graduation at the University of Utah, 1999-2009. These plots show the interaction between sex and age in a competing risks analysis. This was the strongest interaction in the study. Women who started college before the age of 20 graduated more quickly with higher completion rates than men do who started at the same age. (Women in this panel had an especially pronounced 4 year graduation rate.) In contrast, men who started college when they were 20 or older graduated more quickly with higher completion rates than did women who started college at the same age. Gray's test indicated a significant difference between the curves in these panels.

est point of that curve. Thus, not only did LEAP students with average and below admissions indexes graduate in higher proportions than their non-LEAP peers, they also graduated more quickly.

*Being female and, in particular, starting college before age 20.* Sex clearly had the largest effect of any variable in the model. Being male decreased the probability of graduation by 32 percent ( $HR = .68$ ). But this effect was strongly dependent on age. The age x sex interaction is pictured in Figure 4. The coefficient for the male x age interaction was .137, which can be interpreted in two ways. 1. An increase in age of matriculation by 1 year added .137 to the coefficient for male. Being older thus increased the probability of graduation for men. 2. A decrease in the sex variable (from 1 to 0) subtracted .137 from the coefficient for age, which was  $-.057$ . Being female thus made the negative influence of being older on graduating even more

negative, which is to say that women had a higher probability of graduating when younger. Figure 4 reveals that, with respect to men's performance, starting later had little effect on the proportion who eventually graduated but a substantial effect on timing: for men who started later the graduation curve was shifted to the left; the highest graduation rate in the second panel came at 4 years, whereas in the first panel it remained fairly constant between 4 and 8 years. For women, obviously, the age of matriculation had a profound effect both on the proportion of those eventually graduating and on the rate of graduation.

### Discussion

The primary objective of this study was to use event history analysis to investigate the impact of first-year learning community participation on graduation at the University of Utah and, in particular, to re-examine positive findings from an earlier study on the same topic. The secondary objective was methodological: to compare the cause-specific hazards model of graduation (implemented in the R package "survival") with a competing risks model that simultaneously considers drops (implemented in "cmprsk") in order to find out whether the latter model, while theoretically more accurate than the former model, is different enough in practice to warrant its continued use.

We found that LEAP participation did increase the probability of graduation. Moreover, the competing risks analysis in "cmprsk" produced a much higher estimate of the hazard ratio associated with LEAP participation than the analysis in "survival": 1.181 versus 1.1. We conclude that the competing risks model is the superior approach in this context. Not only is it sounder theoretically, but the precision it adds to the LEAP coefficient makes a difference practically.

What does 1.181 represent? The hazard ratio is a way of conceptualizing differences in probability—in this case between LEAP and non-LEAP as predictors of graduation—in percentage terms, against a baseline of 1. 1 indicates no difference in probability. 1.181 thus means that LEAP students have an 18.1 percent greater average probability of graduating at any given time, compared to non-LEAP students. To get a full picture of graduation outcomes, however, it is also necessary to note the proportion of students who actually end up graduating, irrespective of their pace. At 6 years the difference between LEAP and non-LEAP was 5 percent (60 percent versus 55 percent, as can be seen in Figure 2), which, hypothetically speaking, means that an additional 71 LEAP students graduated at the 6 year mark who otherwise would not have (LEAP  $n = 1434$ ).<sup>1</sup> This difference between LEAP and non-LEAP was substantially larger in the case of average and lower admissions index students. The first two panels in Figure 3 showed a difference at 6 years of 9 and 10 percent respectively, differences that continued to expand to the end of the study.

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<sup>1</sup>Note that the numbers listed in Figures 2-4 are lower than those reported in Table 1. This discrepancy is due to the fact that "cmprsk" can work only with complete cases and discarded any rows with missing observations.



Honors participation also increased the probability of graduation in the competing risks analysis, but not by as much as LEAP participation did. It is difficult to explain this difference. One possibility is that the effects of first year academic and social experiences, whether occurring in LEAP or Honors, diminishes as the academic ability and preparation of the student increases. After all, we saw a larger effect of LEAP on lower admissions index students (see Figure 3). Perhaps the same dynamic is operating for Honors students. For these well-prepared and high-performing students transitional programs may not be necessary for academic achievement: they will do well wherever they find themselves. Another possibility is that Honors, during the years of this study, was not, properly speaking, a learning community. Students would have ended up taking classes together, but more by accident than design, and not as part of the same cohort. (Honors has since created several learning communities for first-year students.) This difference in program configuration could explain the difference between LEAP and Honors. Astin argues that peer relationships of the sort developed in learning communities constitute “the single most potent source of influence on growth and development during the undergraduate years” (1993a, p. 398). First-year programs like learning communities harness what he calls “the power of the peer group” to spark engagement and learning (Astin, 1993b, p. 4). The present study suggests that this effect may also be indirectly discernible in graduation outcomes.

Strikingly, the ethnicity variable was not significant. One of the motivations for this study was the suspicion that low numbers of matches reduced power in earlier study (reported in Bliss et al. (2012) and prevented investigation not only into the effect of ethnicity on graduation, but also into the effect of interactions with ethnicity. That suspicion turned out to be grounded. Ethnicity, after controlling for student background, was not significant, nor were any interactions with ethnicity. (As noted above under “Variables,” different ways of constructing this variable had no effect on its significance.)

The sex variable obviously had a large impact on graduation for students in this sample. This impact was perhaps most visible in the interaction between sex and age (Figure 4, which indicated that women graduated more quickly when matriculating below age 20 than they did when matriculating after age 20, with a dramatically higher proportion eventually graduating. Men graduated more quickly when matriculating at age 20 or older. There may be a policy recommendation indicated here: incentives for women to matriculate before age 20 would likely result in dramatic improvements in their graduation rates, whereas men should be encouraged to matriculate at 20 or older.

The extent to which the effects of sex—both main effects and interactions—is due to the local culture is unknown. It would be instructive to compare graduation rates by sex at the University of Utah with those at other universities.

### Limitations

This is an observational study conducted in a complicated institutional environment. The grounds for causal inference are weak. In particular, the variables used as covariates have limited value in correcting for the differences between students who did and did not participate in LEAP, which is a voluntary program. As such, those who sign up for it at orientation may well have higher levels of motivation that are not well captured by this particular set of covariates. Selection bias is a problem. Thus, while causal language is used here—“effects,” “impact”—it is used provisionally, and should be interpreted cautiously.

Probably the weakest variable used in this study was income, being constructed from median income in the student’s home zip code. While socioeconomic status has been shown to have a strong impact on student performance, this variable does not do a very good job of capturing that impact. It probably contains more noise than signal, but, like all the other variables, was left in the model for theoretical reasons, whether significant or not.

### Conclusion

This investigation represented a big step forward methodologically in studies of graduation at the University of Utah. It helped clarify which students most seem to benefit from participating in a learning community—low and average admissions index students—and it quantified that benefit in terms of impacts to graduation.

Future work could focus on the following issues:

*Check model assumptions.* Of course, the violated assumption of non-informative censoring was identified in the case of drops, and served as the impetus to take the competing risks approach. But two key assumptions were not checked: 1. Were the hazards proportional for LEAP and non-LEAP? 2. Was censoring of students who remained enrolled at the end of the study really non-informative censoring? There could have been changes among cohorts during the 10 years of the study that, through censoring a greater proportion of students from the later cohorts, introduced systematic bias.

*Add time-dependent covariates.* Do the effects of covariates vary with time? Modeling these varying effects by fitting a model with time-dependent covariates would provide a clearer understanding of the relative importance of the factors influencing graduation through time.

And, more substantially:

*Improve the set of model covariates.* As noted above, the influence of family background on college performance is profound. We need variables that better capture such differences among students, variables such as (among others) family income, parents’ education, scholarship awards, engagement activities and time spent working in high school.

*Expand the study to include other institutions.* To what extent are the findings reported here unique to the University of Utah? To what extent is the impact of a LEAP a function of its particular institutional context? To draw general conclusions about the impact of learning communities on graduation will require a multi-institutional sample of different kinds of students in differently configured learning communities with different curriculum and different faculty.

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**OFFICE OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES—UNIVERSITY OF UTAH**

**UNDERGRADUATE REPORT TO THE ACADEMIC VICE PRESIDENT**

**AND THE UNIVERSITY SENATE**

October 22, 2012

The Undergraduate Council has completed its study of the LEAP Program.

The External Review Committee was:

M. Gregory Kendrick, Director  
Freshman Cluster Program, University of California Los Angeles

Jennifer Keup, Director  
National Resource Center for the First Year Experience and Students in Transition

Marilyn Linton, Associate Vice Provost  
Undergraduate Studies, University of Oregon

The Internal Review Committee from the University of Utah was:

Patricia Eisenman, Professor  
College of Health

Susan Olson, Associate Vice President Emerita  
Professor Emerita, College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

Brent Schneider, Professor  
College of Fine Arts

The Undergraduate Council Review Committee was:

Sharon Aiken-Wisniewski  
Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs/Undergraduate Studies  
Associate Dean for University College Advising

Alexa Doig, Assistant Professor  
College of Nursing

Ole W. Fischer, Assistant Professor  
School of Architecture

The following summary is based on the LEAP Program self-study and reports provided by External and Internal Review Committees.

## **Part I. General Program Overview**

This is the first formal review of the LEAP Program that was established in 1994 by an interdisciplinary group of faculty.

### **Program Description**

The LEAP program mission, as described in the self study document is to “provide first-year students with a good start in college, equipping them with strategies leading to academic success, anchoring them in campus and community life, assisting them in choosing and beginning their majors, and thereby encouraging their retention and persistence to graduation.” In 2005 the LEAP Program won a university-level award for Equity and Diversity, and in 2011 was given the Utah Campus Compact Award for a Community Engaged Program.

The LEAP program enrolls approximately one third of the incoming freshman class, having enrolled 1000 students in 2010.

Currently all tracks in the LEAP program offer a two-semester general education course series (called LEAP seminars) that satisfy one of the humanities and one of the social/behavioral sciences Intellectual Explorations requirements, as well as the University’s diversity requirement. Students are enrolled with a cohort and take the two seminars with the same instructor. In 2011-2012, the LEAP program taught 30 sections of the first year LEAP seminar series. The LEAP program also offers LEAP sections of the lower division writing requirement course in partnership with the University’s Writing Program. LEAP courses have an enrollment cap of 30 students.

The LEAP Program also offers tracks for students in specific majors or pre-professional tracks (Architecture, Engineering, College of Health, Business, Pre-Law, Fine Arts, and Education), special interest areas (Health Sciences, Service Learning) and student groups (residence halls, returning veterans, and international students). Two of these tracks offer a four-year program for under-represented and disadvantaged students—Health Sciences LEAP and Pre-Law LEAP. These tracks are described in more detail in the self-study document. The LEAP Program partners with University College to offer a one-credit course to help students investigate majors at the university.

Another component of LEAP is the Peer Advisor Program where LEAP alumni return to provide peer mentoring to current freshman cohorts. Peer Advisors who receive a stipend, are trained and supervised by a program faculty member, and provide a range of support services to the students. Each PA is assigned to one LEAP course. One of the Peer Advisors serves in a leadership role as a Senior Peer Advisor.

LEAP students are encouraged to participate in student engagement activities beyond the classroom, such as research, community service, teaching, and leadership activities. In some of the tracks, this level of engagement is a required part of the program.

LEAP is also a partner with the Honors program. Students achieving an A or A- grade in a LEAP course can count that course towards an Honors degree. There are scholarships available to students who transition from LEAP into Honors.

## **Program Administration**

The LEAP Program is currently under the leadership of the Director, Carolyn Bliss and Associate Director, Jeff Webb. Internal and External Reviewers make particular note of the time and efforts that these program administrators have invested into the ongoing management, evaluation, refinement and expansion of the program.

There is an Executive Assistant (1.0 FTE) and an assistant to the Executive Assistant (0.75 FTE). These support staff manage administrative duties, planning and executing program events, keeping financial records, and supervision of outreach activities.

In 2010, the LEAP program instituted a new formal standing advisory committee called the LEAP Policy Board (to replace a cumbersome 25 member advisory board). The main role of the Policy Board was to implement a new faculty hiring and promotion policy (see **Faculty**). It was noted in the External Reviewer's Report and in the program's response to that review that this board could be better utilized to formalize program governance, and help the program respond to opportunities and negotiate challenges. The LEAP Policy Board currently lacks a formal role and mission.

## **Faculty**

The LEAP Program currently employs thirteen faculty (updated, provided in the LEAP Program's response to the Internal and External Reviews). All LEAP faculty (except the instructor for the Architecture LEAP who has a MS in Architecture) have a PhD in the humanities or social sciences in alignment with the topics of the first year seminar courses. LEAP faculty have won a wide variety of awards at the University and in the community.

Teaching faculty are generally part-time, with auxillary or academic staff appointments. The LEAP program has a systematic approach to socializing and mentoring new faculty in the role of LEAP instructor.

Faculty in the program, which is not directly associated with any college at the university, recently gained the opportunity to be appointed and promoted through the ranks of Lectureship positions. This opportunity was put in place in 2010 when the LEAP program was recognized by the University as a Qualified Interdisciplinary Teaching Program. In the program's response to the Internal and External Reviewers Report, it was stated that when hiring, retaining and promoting faculty, the LEAP program looks for teaching excellence and a record of scholarly work. The latter will become important for formal retention and promotion processes.

The University of Utah wants to increase the number of new students in LEAP. Also with the projected growth of new students that the University anticipates in the next 4 years, the program will need to hire more faculty to maintain the current instructor-to-student ratio. Another concern was limited funds for faculty professional development (e.g., attending conferences). When interviewed by the Internal Review Committee, LEAP faculty expressed an interest in becoming more involved in the university as a whole and serving on university committees.

## **Students**

LEAP is designed for incoming freshmen, however any interested student may enroll and not all fit the traditional freshman mold. The latter groups include transfer students, freshmen with a significant number of AP or concurrent enrollment credit, returning missionaries, etc.

### *Recruitment*

The LEAP program recruits students through its website, printed materials (sent out with all student recruitment packets through the University), and presentations at every orientation and student recruitment event. The program has a recruitment video that is shown at new student orientation. Former LEAP students are involved in the recruitment events. However, the program voiced a desire to find better ways to make incoming students aware of the program earlier and a better way to clarify the myriad of options within the learning community.

### *Student Support and Advising*

The LEAP program offers student advising through LEAP seminar faculty who remain with the students for the two-semester course series and formal Peer Advising with one Peer Advisor assigned to each class. Also, University College offers modules on advising in many of the LEAP courses. Peer Advisors help with student retention, model successful student behavior, and are the liaison between the professor and the students. LEAP students can enroll in a one credit-hour course in major selection to explore majors with advising from the course faculty and advisors from different colleges.

## **Curriculum**

As noted in the program overview, the LEAP curriculum consists of a two-semester general education course series (called LEAP seminars) that satisfies one of the humanities and one of the social/behavioral sciences Intellectual Explorations requirements, as well as the University's diversity requirement. There are currently 14 different LEAP tracks and many of the LEAP seminars relate to the theme of the track. Many of the seminars involve guest speakers from colleges on campus or experts from the community. The program also offers LEAP sections of WRTG 2010 that satisfy the lower division writing requirement. In addition to the first year LEAP seminars and writing course sections, the LEAP Program provides students with a series of 10 library sessions where they learn about library resources and research strategies with university librarians. Students are encouraged/expected to apply their library training to their projects in their LEAP courses.

## **Diversity**

### *Faculty*

The LEAP program reports that eight instructors are women, five are men, and two are persons of color. The proportion of female faculty is substantially higher than for the University as a whole.

### *Students*

The LEAP program has recruited approximately equal numbers of male and female students, with the females consistently representing slightly less than 50% of the student body over the past 5 years. Approximately one third of LEAP students self-identify as non-white, which is significantly higher than the University average (11%).

## **Program Effectiveness - Outcomes Assessment**

### *Evaluation Methods*

The LEAP program's intended outcomes for students are stated in the self study document as follows:

Through participation in LEAP students will gain:

- The desire and confidence necessary to persevere in university study, as measured by: a) increased year-to-year retention, and b) on-time graduation.
- An understanding of available fields of study, enabling them to choose their majors in an informed and timely way.
- Intellectual skills ranging from knowledge of specific domains to analysis of text and data to evaluation of arguments (adapted from Bloom's "Taxonomy of Cognitive Skills").
- A sense of their active role in the university community.

The LEAP Program has a systematic approach to program evaluation. Although the program originally used a 'home grown' survey and the University's senior exit survey (which is not implemented anymore), they currently use Educational Benchmarking Incorporated (EBI), an external company that administers online surveys and benchmarks programs against peer programs and institutions. The focus of the EBI survey is on the aforementioned expected student outcomes and the degree to which students believe the program is contributing to their growth as researchers, problem solvers, communicators, and citizens.

The LEAP Program faculty have also conducted research studies to compare outcomes for LEAP vs. non-LEAP students, and to examine program outcomes over time.

The Engineering LEAP program students create a portfolio of their work throughout the program, which is also used to track student learning outcomes.

Both the External and Internal Reviewer Reports highlight the program's dedication to comprehensively evaluating student progression, achievement, and satisfaction related to expected student outcomes.

### *Summary of Main Program Outcomes*

Student evaluations of LEAP courses are strong—recent course evaluation scores averaged 5.3/6 with an average of 5.45/6 for instructor scores. Historically these scores have been equal to, or in most instances, well above the university average.

Results from the 2011 EBI survey (first survey administered through this method, 27% response rate) found that students' perception of course effectiveness was related to three factors – whether the course improved critical thinking, the usefulness of course readings, and whether the course included engaging pedagogy. All three factors were highly rated by students who completed the survey.

Results from a 'twin study' conducted by LEAP program faculty found that 1) LEAP students returned to the University for their second year at higher rates than matched non-LEAP students, 2) LEAP students had higher GPAs than matched non-LEAP students, and 3) 4- and 6-year graduation rates are higher among the LEAP students. These results were even more prominent for women.



## **Facilities and Resources**

### *Physical Space*

The LEAP program is housed in a small area within the Sill Center. The space has faculty offices, rooms for PAs, and space for the administrative staff. The program reports that with the remodeling of the building, more space (and hopefully a better designed) space will address their expanding space requirements.

The program also has a 'LEAP House' next to the Heritage Center on upper campus that provides a classroom, small computer lab, student lounge, and office space primarily for the Health Sciences LEAP program.

### *Program Funding*

The LEAP program is funded by Undergraduate Studies (i.e., not through student credit hour revenue). The program's estimate of expenses is close to \$700,000/year with a discretionary budget of \$9000/year.

The LEAP program secured \$62,000 in scholarships for students and Peer Advisors. Program administrators consider this amount inadequate for the number of students (~1000) and continue to seek more development/advancement funding.

## **II. Commendations:**

Both committees recognized the special strengths of the LEAP program:

1. The LEAP faculty fosters a collaborative culture both within its ranks and amongst faculty staff and administration, which underlines their emphasis on partnerships.
2. The LEAP faculty consists of dedicated, high-quality scholars and teachers from a wide range of personal backgrounds and disciplinary areas. Their skills have been recognized both by students in course evaluations and honored by national awards. These faculty members have become experts in freshman education and successfully integrated new colleagues into the collaborative style of the LEAP program.
3. The LEAP program has been successful in community building among students. The two-semester format keeps students together with the same classmates and instructor in small course sizes that allows relationships to grow. Increasing enrollment testifies to the program's appeal to incoming students as well as the support from advising in encouraging students to register for these courses. Also, the College of Engineering sees LEAP as critical for facilitating concepts required in the ABET accreditation process, which resulted in many engineering students enrolling in LEAP.
4. The assessment plan for the LEAP program is comprehensive and innovative. It generates information that provides a strong foundation for a data-driven decision making culture. The assessment plan has evolved over the years to maintain relevancy and effectiveness. It is inclusive of course and instructor evaluations as well as student level assessments that include a national assessment tool and a question on the institution's graduating senior survey. Together these tools collect data that addresses a range of outcome measures that speak to LEAP

students' retention and graduation as well as the students' success with respect to other learning outcomes (such as critical thinking, reading and writing skills, information literacy, etc.).

The LEAP assessment plan represents a standard of best practice from a methodological perspective as well. Using data from multiple time-points allows for the development of a full and rich picture of program effectiveness and impact. The use of standard control group (i.e. comparison of LEAP and non-LEAP students) and of sophisticated matching and control group studies in the form of twin and triplet studies represents an innovative approach. Results from multivariate analyses are able to explore the more nuanced and conditional effects of the LEAP program on student outcomes. Finally, social network analyses are cutting-edge means of addressing the impact that the academic and social connections forged in the LEAP programs have on the satisfaction and performance of students. These ongoing self-assessment efforts will be published and have been supported with research grants.

5. The goals of the LEAP program – increased year-to-year retention and on-time graduation – are particularly amenable to precise analysis. In the twin study students who had participated in LEAP returned to the University for their second year (6.5%-points higher), earned higher average grades in their first year and also graduated at a statistically significantly higher rate than did non-LEAP students. While all students reap practically and statistically significant benefits from LEAP participation, it appears that the impact is even greater for women and students of color, who have been historically at-risk populations at the University of Utah.
6. The Peer Advising program is one of the most impressive features of the LEAP program. It provides freshmen students an additional source of guidance and gives the advisors a deeper experience with and lasting commitment to the University of Utah. Many peer advisors apply for the position because of the positive experience they had with a peer advisor in their freshman year. As strong advocates for the program, they understood and articulated its benefits, both for first-year students and for themselves as liaisons between faculty and LEAP students. The leadership opportunity for service on campus and in the wider community is particularly impressive. As part of their Peer Advisor (PA) committee work, PAs are involved in service initiatives and fundraising activities.

The training and mentoring of the Peer Advisors is well designed and successful in achieving its goals: PA's enjoy a supportive community and feel well prepared to work with students and faculty. Initial training is done through a 10-week summer online course and two-day workshop at the start of the fall semester; PA's meet with the LEAP professor regularly and as a group every other week. Peer Advisors felt the online training, experience in speaking to groups and other leadership activities, opportunity to work on campus, and relationship with faculty were all very good. The triplet study demonstrated that peer advisors persisted to graduation at a significantly higher rate than regular LEAP students or non-LEAP students.

7. Another strength of the LEAP program is its reliance on campus partners, including the academic departments that sponsor their own LEAP (e.g. departments in architecture, business, health, education, fine arts, and engineering). It draws from collaborative partnerships with numerous other campus and community partners, such as the Marriott Library, Crossroads Urban Center, Writing Program, Orientation, Washington Elementary School, Honors, Neighborhood House and University College. Qualified students are able to transit easily from LEAP to Honors, and there are 10 scholarships reserved for such students.

All of these formal and informal partnerships are represented among the membership of the new LEAP Policy Board, which affords these different campus constituency groups the opportunity to convene and communicate with one another.

8. The current LEAP director Carolyn Bliss is providing strong leadership for the program as well as being a dedicated teacher for the four-year Health Science LEAP students. In addition to the formal program assessments, the innovations in LEAP programming as well as her support for faculty through mentoring individuals and developing the new policy of Lecturer appointments testify to her foresight and skill.

The LEAP program enjoys significant buy-in and support from the senior leadership of the campus. It reports to Martha Bradley, Senior Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, who provides strong and visionary leadership for the program and represents it to the upper administration.

### **III. Recommendations**

LEAP is a strong program that makes multiple contributions to the University of Utah campus by providing an opportunity to explore and understand a university education in a safe, supportive environment that includes committed faculty and engaged peers that provide mentorship. With that being said, both reports from the internal and external reviewers provided recommendations that engage the LEAP Program in continued growth and development. These recommendations focused on strategic planning, commitment to faculty, exploring alternative funding models, and comprehensive marketing.

#### Strategic Planning

LEAP has experienced tremendous success that is clearly evidenced in the assessment process as well as the variety of options available to students. Due to this success, it has positively responded to requests to do more beyond first year students. It has provided programming for pre-professional students beyond the first year, it offers courses that meet bachelor's degree requirements, and it is expanding the upper division course offerings again. It was recommended that LEAP take this opportunity to participate in a strategic planning process. The campus is anticipating growing enrollment, new and enhanced programming for new students, and changes to the general education program. Before LEAP moves too quickly in developing additional offerings, it is important to articulate a vision, mission, and goals that offer focus and direction. Some questions that might contribute to this strategic review are:

- What is the mission of LEAP?
- How will the activities of LEAP execute and communicate the mission?
- How will this mission be communicated across the campus?
- How will this plan nurture current “champions” and grow a new cadre of supporters for sustainability?
- What name or tagline explains this mission?

The act of strategic planning offers a foundation for reacting to the campus growth and other changes that will impact first year students.

## Faculty

The Internal and External Reviewer Reports discussed one of the key resources of the LEAP Program, which is the faculty. This is a dedicated cohort of teachers and scholars who are focused on pedagogy that enhances the experience of the first year students at the U of U. But some fundamental issues are surfacing as the faculty grows to support the program offerings. These issues focus on faculty development, internal collaboration, and resources to expand and explore effective pedagogical practices for first year students. Thus, it is recommended that the LEAP Director facilitate a dialogue with the LEAP faculty that clarifies their needs with respect to the mission established in the strategic plan, identifies opportunities to meet these needs, and prioritizes these opportunities with respect to positive impact on the LEAP Program and undergraduate students at the U of U. The LEAP Director will then have a direction as she works with various entities to create a resource stream that focuses on faculty who are the foundation of the LEAP Program.

It was also recommended that LEAP faculty participate in the Faculty Activity Report (FARS). With the recent change in appointment and advancement in the Lecturer ranks this is a key suggestion that supports the faculty status of this group.

## Resources & Funding

The current funding model for LEAP is addressed through the Office of Undergraduate Studies with a small budget for LEAP non-personnel expenses (reported as \$9000). In the past this model was advantageous due to the scope of LEAP. But LEAP is a program that supports the mission of the U of U through teaching multiple sections of multiple courses to new and continuing students, engages these students in community learning, and models development of relationships with faculty at a research extensive institution. Also, the number of students engaged through LEAP has grown tremendously in the last 10 years. Due to the current scope of LEAP, once a strategic plan is developed, the Director should explore funding models that would reflect the leadership LEAP offers in transitioning new students to the institution. This exploration should include:

- exploring a funding model used for academic departments ,
- understanding the impact of collaboration and how to share expenses,
- understanding the opportunities presented through the LEAP Advisory Board as well as other committee memberships held by LEAP faculty and staff to explore revenue streams,
- exploring external donors who might be interested in funding if a name was tied to the program or certain activities in the program,
- Increase collaboration with and solicit support (funding, advisors, etc.) from Colleges and Departments, especially those for which the LEAP program offers specific tracks, and
- establishing perpetual gifts for a continuous scholarship stream for LEAP students.

As the U of U campus grows and considers alternative funding models, the fiscal future of LEAP should be considered.

## Marketing & Branding

Both reports discussed challenges with the name since most people do not remember or know what LEAP stands for. It was recommended that the name be changed, however the Director of the LEAP Program expressed concern due to the familiarity of the name on campus. She did discuss some “taglines” that could trail the name to offer focus and definition. Once the naming issue is clarified and the strategic plan is formalized, it is imperative that a marketing plan be developed that informs all relevant parties of this key program in a timely manner so that new students who arrive at Orientation are anticipating enrollment in LEAP. This marketing plan should extend to the U of U community to guarantee that all faculty and staff are aware and encouraging students to participate in this opportunity that has multiple facets for contributing to first year retention and overall graduation success. Some questions that inform this recommendation are:

- What is the brand for LEAP?
- How is this brand marketed to key constituencies to be clear and concise on what LEAP has to offer and why students should participate?

Through branding and marketing, LEAP will reach the appropriate students and foster success.

**Memorandum of Understanding  
LEAP Program  
Undergraduate Council Review**

This memorandum of understanding is a summary of decisions reached at a wrap-up meeting on January 7, 2013 and concludes the Undergraduate Council Review of the LEAP Program. Michael L. Hardman, Interim Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs; Martha Bradley, Senior Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs; Steve Roens, Senior Associate Dean of the Office of Undergraduate Studies; Carolyn Bliss, Director of the LEAP Program; and Jeff Webb, Associate Director of the LEAP Program, were present.

The discussion centered on, but was not limited to, commendations and recommendations included in the Undergraduate Council Review completed on November 29, 2012.

**Recommendation 1. *Strategic Planning***

The LEAP Program should undertake a strategic planning process that a. envisions the program in the context of the other learning communities and programs on campus that serve incoming and continuing students; and b. connects growth and resources to metrics of student retention and graduation rates.

**Recommendation 2. *Re-naming the LEAP Program***

As part of the strategic planning process, LEAP should consider renaming the program "LEAP First-Year Learning Communities" or "ULEAP First-Year Learning Communities."

**Recommendation 3. *Faculty Development***

The budget of the Office of Undergraduate Studies will include \$10,000 each year for LEAP faculty development that could be used to send LEAP faculty to conferences and to provide an incentive system for faculty. This will be a new budget request.

**Recommendation 4. *Professional Marketing***

LEAP needs to find better ways to insure that faculty, advisors and administrators across campus know about the program and its mission. In addition, the current version of the LEAP orientation message is overly complex. LEAP needs to have a better marketing approach to streamline this. The annual budget of the Office of Undergraduate Studies will include an element for professional marketing for the LEAP Program. This will be a new budget request for \$5,000.

**Recommendation 5. *Administrative Recognition of LEAP Faculty***

LEAP faculty should be recognized by the University as part of a program rather than as adjunct faculty, and so should complete the Faculty Activity Report every year and serve on University committees.

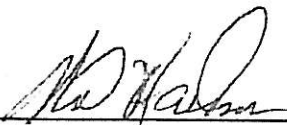
**Recommendation 6. *LEAP and the Integrated Minor***


LEAP represents an excellent starting point for integrated minors and should work to further develop these.

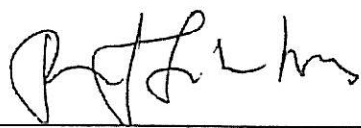
**Recommendation 7. Diversity**

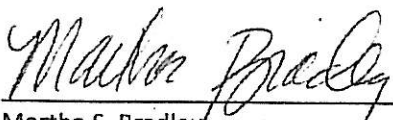
LEAP should undertake an assessment of how students' attitudes toward diversity change as a result of participation in the program. This assessment should focus particularly on behaviors with regard to those conceived of as different or "other" – both the behaviors of white students and of students of color and how these change as a result of participation in LEAP, and particularly what effects, if any, the diversity semester of the LEAP curriculum has on such behaviors.

This memorandum of understanding is to be followed by annual letters of progress from the Director of the Program to the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs. Letters will be submitted each year until all of the actions in the preceding paragraphs have been addressed.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Michael L. Hardman  
Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

  
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Carolyn Bliss  
Director, LEAP Program

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jeff Webb  
Associate Director, LEAP Program

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Martha S. Bradley  
Senior Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs