



TEAM REPORT OF FINDINGS

Lesley University

Application for

Renewal of State Board of Education Degree Granting Authority

Review date: February 12, 2016

State Review Team:

Mary Mahoney O’Neil (Team Chair)
University of Maine

Erin Connor
University of New England

Camilla Fecteau
Saint Joseph’s College

Rachelle Tome
Maine Department of Education

Non-voting participants:

The Honorable Nichi Farnham
Observer
Maine State Board of Education

Mr. Ángel Martínez Loredó
Higher Education Specialist
Maine Department of Education

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Review Methods

This document constitutes the report of the team appointed by the Maine State Board of Education to review the application by Lesley University to renew its authorization to offer graduate degrees in the State of Maine from spring 2016 to the Spring of 2021.

The Lesley University review was completed in accordance with provisions contained within Rule 05- 071, Chapter 170, for degree authorization for out-of-state postsecondary institutions.

The review team was comprised of the following members: Dr. Erin Connor, Associate Director of Graduate Programs of University of New England; Camilla Fecteau, Biology Laboratory Coordinator and Instructor at St. Joseph's College; Rachelle Tome, Chief Academic Officer at the Maine Department of Education; Dr. Mary Mahoney-O'Neil, Associate Dean of the College of Education and Human Development at the University of Maine served as the committee chair. The team was supported by: Mr. Angel Loredo, Higher Education Specialist for the Maine Department of Education, and the Honorable Nichi Farnham, who was an observer from the Maine State Board of Education; both were non-voting participants.

The renewal process began with the original submission of documents by Lesley University to the Maine Department of Education, in June 2014. Due to transitions within the Maine Department of Education, process review did not begin until February 2016. A renewal review team was selected in early January 2016. Materials were distributed to the team for review early February, 2016. The team reviewed materials submitted by Lesley University and met with representatives from Lesley University via video-conference from the University of Maine in Orono, Maine on Friday, February 12, 2016.

Operating Authorization and Accreditation

Lesley University, located in Cambridge, Massachusetts, has been offering courses and programs in Maine since 1997. Founded in 1909, as the Lesley School, the school's primary focus was teacher preparation. In 1941, the school was incorporated, becoming Lesley College and became formally known as Lesley University in 2000. Lesley University offers face-to-face and low residency graduate certificate and Master Degree programs in Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts, and online and low residency graduate certificates and Master Degree programs in forty-seven states, and the District of Columbia.

Lesley University has been accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, (NEASC), since 1952. The Educator Preparation Program at Lesley University is accredited under the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) Quality Principles through the CAEP Accreditation System, for a period of seven years, from 2014 to 2021. The Educator Preparation Program at Lesley University will seek accreditation under the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) Standards, fall 2021. Lesley University has been authorized to operate by the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education, since 1941.

Standard A - Organization and Governance

Lesley University maintains by-laws, which clearly define the powers and duties of the Board of Trustees, currently comprised of 31 members and 8 trustees emeriti. Through this structure, the Board retains appropriate controls and powers in the governance of the institution. Operational authority is clearly delegated to the President and the academic and administrative leadership team. An organizational chart was provided to the review team that outlined specific functional responsibilities.

Faculty governance is outlined in a Faculty Governance Handbook. The Faculty Assembly represents faculty members in matters such as faculty life and provides an avenue for input into curriculum and support for academic integrity of the University. The Lesley University team indicated that faculty, which has been consistent over the past 10 years, also has a voice in recruiting and marketing decisions.

The University team shared efforts to include student voice in the university's governance as demonstrated through evaluation activities conducted to gather feedback, including surveys at graduation, and participation in the recent NEASC review.

This standard is met.

Standard B - Institutional Objective

Lesley University enjoys campuses in Cambridge, Massachusetts, as well as school based residency programs. In its mission statement, Lesley University states it “engages students in transformative education, through active learning, scholarly research, diverse forms of artistic expression, and the integration of rigorous academics with practical and professional experience.” This transformative education will result in students and graduates who are “self-realized, socially conscious, service-oriented caretakers of society and the environment.” To support this mission, Lesley University distinguishes the core values of inquiry, community, diversity and citizenship, upon which it builds its foundation.

The most notable addition since the last renewal is the school based residency collaboration with Berwick Academy, in Berwick, Maine, and the request for a new online M.Ed. in Effective Teaching (with specializations).

This standard is met.

Standard C- Degree Requirements

Lesley University adheres to the NEASC guidelines for credit hours and degree attainment. The Master degree programs in Maine range from 32 to 36 credit hours of coursework, beyond the bachelor's degree. Ph.D. programs require 45 credit hours beyond the Master degree hours. Each credit hour corresponds with a minimum of 15 contact hours of class time. Students must maintain a minimum 3.0 grade point average on a 4.0 scale to continue with graduate study. Only courses numbered 5000 or above will be accepted toward graduate degree programs, and all course work must be completed within seven years of the start of the course.

This standard is met.

Standard D - Admissions Requirements

All admission requirements for Lesley University programs are clearly articulated in the Academic Catalog, website and admissions materials. Eligibility for all Master's degree programs, require students must hold a Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university, among other items depending on the specific program.

Admission to a doctoral program requires degree applicants must hold a Bachelor's degree and a Master's degree from a regionally accredited college or university, and a satisfactory grade point average. Although no specific GPA is stated, the faculty state that a holistic review of the student's academic and life experiences are taken into consideration for graduate study. All application materials for Lesley programs filter through one central location for review. Lesley has clearly articulated criteria for transfer credits, and for refund of tuition and fees.

Recruitment and retention efforts find its strongest roots in the referrals from current students and graduates of the programs, in Maine schools, and the program liaison. All students are assigned a professional academic advisor. These advisors are associated with programs and the school based residency programs. Assistant Directors serve as liaisons between students and university support offices.

Maine student enrollment data from 2011 to 2013 indicates strong trends in enrollment and degree attainment. During that time frame, 83 students were enrolled in programs and 65 students were granted degrees.

This standard is met.

Standard E - Academic Programs

The educational program and curricular offered in Maine is reflective of the philosophy, purposes and objectives of Lesley University. Off-campus programs are stated to have the same rigor and standards of excellence to those conducted at the home campus.

In the pursuit of best practice to meet program objectives, curriculum has been developed within each program specific to the content and focus of the program, and with the express goal of providing its students with the tools and perspectives necessary to become leaders in their schools and communities. With this submission, Lesley University has asked for approval of a new program: M.Ed. in Effective Teaching, as an online program.

Dedication to the art of teaching with specific attention to needs of the students and schools of Maine, is evidenced in the new (2014) collaborative one year+, school residency program at Berwick Academy. The school administration and veteran faculty play an integral role in the instruction and mentoring of all interns, with the Lesley liaison maintaining a rich and consistent communication and relationship with the school and the interns through out the experience.

The evaluation of student performance and progress is identified by the faculty as a critical piece to student success, student satisfaction, and the health and relevance of the program. The grading system is well articulated and easily accessible on the schools website and in program materials.

In February, 2014 Lesley University was reviewed by CEAP/TEAC, where which Lesley identified its Unified Assessment System. Collection and scoring of student work that is tied to program outcome competencies across a program of study, are evidenced in the ePortfolio, and are tied to the learning outcomes of the program, overall.

Additionally, students complete course evaluations and exit surveys highlighting the following areas: program curriculum, program services, program delivery mode and scheduling, and lastly, the overall experience, for review of faculty at the conclusion of each academic year.

This standard is met.

Standard F- Faculty

The faculties, at Lesley University, have earned master's or doctorate degrees in their content area and have experience teaching in higher education. Most have worked in the field for over a decade. Core faculty members play a central role in the continuous improvement of the academic programs. They develop, revise, and evaluate curricula, mentor adjunct faculty, and participate in policy development and governance.

Lesley University does not participate in a tenure process. Instead, a regular review process for core faculty plays a large role in determining contract lengths (1, 2, 3, 5, 7, or 10 years). The Program Directors and Academic Supervisors conduct evaluations of core faculty utilizing formal and informal, formative and summative evaluations. Components of the core faculty evaluation include:

- Annual Faculty Report (self-reporting instrument)
- Classroom Observation by academic supervisor conducted for each contract cycle
- Peer Review by choice of faculty member for each contract cycle
- Faculty Self-Assessment for each contract cycle
- Student Course Evaluations each semester

Assessments are reviewed at the annual Academic Assessment meeting. A professional development plan is completed by the faculty member. Core faculty have an opportunity to develop, implement, and evaluate curricula. Professional development is offered for designing and implementing online programs.

The effectiveness of adjunct faculty is evaluated through student course evaluations and reviews by program directors. For on-site programs, instructors are often observed in person. If a student course evaluation trigger concerns, course Mentors communicate or meet with faculty to review problem areas identified.

The Faculty Mentoring Program enables Lesley to monitor course fidelity and quality. Each course offered by Lesley has an assigned Mentor, which is usually a core faculty member. Mentoring typically occurs via phone or e-mail. With the transition to more online courses, the Mentor for each course has complete access to all course sessions and materials. They are “embedded” into online courses taught by adjuncts and review all content and communications. Mentors review and approve course syllabi along with proposed changes to course curriculum. This ensures consistent expectations and performance in each course offered by Lesley University. The mentor is available to work with faculty to improve the effectiveness of their courses. Additional training is also available to faculty teaching online for the first time.

Faculty governance occurs through the Faculty Assembly, which plays a key role in developing the University's intellectual direction and academic standards. It also represents the collective professional interests of the faculty and participates in the development of institutional strategies and policy initiatives. All individuals with full-time or pro-rated faculty contracts are full voting members of the Faculty Assembly.

This standard is met.

Standard G - Student Services

Lesley University's system of student service and support includes: advising, career resource center, financial aid, instructional and student support for online learning.

All students are assigned a professional academic advisor. These advisors are associated with programs and program modalities. Assistant Directors serve as liaisons between students and university support offices. For example, students who request ADA accommodations via any student support professional or faculty member are directed to the Lesley University Disability Services office. Students are also assigned a faculty advisor with whom they may consult on

career and professional concerns. There is an expectation of at least three advising sessions between the student and the faculty advisor.

The Career Resource Center is available to help students and alumni with their job search and career advancement goals. Career services supports are available online or by appointment either in-person or by phone. The career website collection and referral list also points Maine students to career development resources in the areas near the cohort locations in Maine.

Maine students have access to financial aid advisors who are knowledgeable about the full spectrum of financial aid issues including those resources that are unique to Maine or New England. All students who meet eligibility requirements, complete a financial aid application and are formally admitted to a program of study are eligible for some type of financial aid. After financial aid application is submitted, students receive an award letter. Satisfactory Academic Progress must be maintained throughout the student's program in order to receive financial aid. Student Financial Services Office is audited to by the Lesley University auditors and complies with FISAP reporting procedures as a recipient of Title IV funds.

Maine students can access support for courses delivered online through Instructional and Student Support for Online Learning (eLIS). Via this group, online students receive enrolment management support, orientation and program advising.

The standard is met.

Standard H - Library and Learning Resources

Lesley University recognizes and accepts the responsibility to provide library services and resources to distance learners and those on campus. Maine students have access to an extensive array of resources comprised of 90+ electronic databases, virtual reference and instructional services. Attention is given to increasing the online repository, providing electronic resources for physical offerings whenever possible. The Assistant Library Director provides administrative coordination and communication about services to students. There are highly technical library representatives for each program of study and instructional staff is trained for use of online resources on a regular basis.

Access to online services is provided through a BlackBoard portal. This structure allows students to gain access through a single sign-on to all library services where they can search databases, download articles and e-books, view videos and access image and performance documents. Library staff is attentive to removing barriers that may limit access for handicapped students. Accessibility is addressed through use of UDL with media resources.

The Lesley University review team described a variety of mechanisms designed to provide extensive support for distance learners. Information Literacy instruction is provided through online tutorials. An orientation for students introduces them to the library and student resources. A number of structures provide access to support for personal library instruction via e-mail, instant messaging, telephone, or in person.

This standard is met.

Standard I – Facilities

Lesley University currently offers on-site academic programs at three locations in Maine.

- Sweet Tree Arts center in Hope
- Berwick Academy in South Berwick
- The Friedman Field Station in Edmunds Township

Each site is supported by an on-site cohort liaison. This individual provides instructional and learning support to faculty and students. Each location contains standard technology and materials required for course offerings. Facility use and contracts are overseen by Lesley's on-campus Regional Operations Manager. Site guidelines have not changed since Lesley's 2011 renewal application.

This Standard is met.

Standard J - Financial Resources

The Lesley University review team described structures in place to allow for effective oversight of financial operations. The University has internal oversight, resource allocation, and planning mechanism and the Board of Trustees has ultimate fiduciary responsibility to allocate college resources to meet its commitments. A budget director provides attention to contingency planning, sustainability, future growth and acquisition of additional resources.

Updated financial reports were provided as requested and the information suggests that the institution has demonstrated sufficient resources to support the implementation of Maine programming. The Lesley University team sufficiently addressed the review team's questions regarding how the institution will protect the needs and expectations of its Maine students.

This Standard is met.

Standard K – Telecommunications

Lesley University offers online Master's degrees and Advanced Professional Certificates through an online modality. Courses taught online meet the same learning objectives as the versions taught on-ground. Lesley University staff and faculty review courses taught in multiple modalities and have found that student work and participation have been of the same quality and in some cases higher than courses offered in the on-ground modality.

Professional academic advisors work with students to prepare them for online learning through orientation and other web-based support. Lesley student technology support is available 24/7 by phone or email, utilizing a ticketing system.

All students have access to Blackboard as the Learning Management System, secured through a username and password, to access course material, discussions, and assignment submission and feedback. Online course work may include forum discussions and collaborative work such as group projects. Lesley provides support for online students accessing Blackboard via quick-guides with specific directions for certain tasks and the guidance of faculty and staff.

Faculty hired to teach courses delivered online in which Maine students participate are hired using the same criteria used to secure faculty working on the Cambridge, MA campus. Faculty and staff are engaged in ongoing discussions around curriculum content and the use of technology and modalities to support student learning. Training for faculty in teaching in the online mode is offered on a variety of topics. This training is offered rather than required. Lesley's Online Course Design Rubric is based on the Quality Matters standards ensuring Lesley's online courses remain current, engaging, and rigorous.

The standard is met

Recommendation: Lesley staff and faculty should investigate the benefits and costs of requiring some level of online instructional training/professional development.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

It is the decision of this Review Team that Lesley University has successfully met each of the articulated standards, of this review, to provide graduate degree programming in the State of Maine.

RECOMMENDATION TO THE MAINE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

It is the recommendation of the Review Team that the Maine State Board of Education grant the request for reauthorization of the Lesley University graduate degree programs in the State of Maine. The recommended period of renewal: March 2016 through March 2021.