



Vision and Strategy for the Further Development of Research Activities: a Two-Year Plan (2018-2020)

Introduction

LCC International University values and actively promotes research activity and scholarship throughout its faculty. As a private international liberal arts university LCC follows Ernest Boyer's model of scholarship,¹ seeking a complementary balance between excellence in university-level course content and classroom instruction, and scholarly inquiry in the form of knowledge production (so-called emergent research) and dissemination of knowledge as a vital and renewable product.

LCC covers 6 study areas, and in 2017 had a faculty FTE total of 38.4 – 6.4 FTE per study area. The # of publications per FTE in 2017 was: .55. Though quantity remains comparatively low due to faculty size, LCC strives for high quality in research output. For example, 27 of the 30 publications on our 2016-2017 combined top-five-publications (per study area) are published in international organs; there are 3 monographs with high-level international publishers and worldwide coverage, 5 SCOPUS indexed articles, 11 chapters in edited volumes with wide international coverage, and significant examples of interdisciplinary work borne out of LCC's liberal arts model.

LCC continues to grow the size of the fulltime core faculty; LCC continues to raise research productivity expectations among its faculty; and LCC maintains expectations of high quality and international placement of publications. LCC also continues to flourish in the areas of international faculty mobility – especially capitalizing on networks and affiliations with North American scholars for the purposes of enhancing LCC research culture and acting as a bridge between Lithuanian and North American scholarly activity.

The Two Year Plan (2018-2020)

The plan for research activity at LCC International University for the period of the upcoming two academic years (2018-2019 and 2019-2020) divides into two categories. The first category outlines goals dedicated to safeguarding the quality and increasing momentum of research-related initiatives already implemented and enjoying ongoing success. The second category lays out plans for new initiatives for advancing research culture at LCC.

I. Ongoing Research Initiatives

In the past several years LCC has launched key initiatives for the significant improvement and development of research that have met with success, and which LCC continues to promote.

¹ Boyer, E. L., *Scholarship reconsidered: Priorities of the professoriate*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1990.

Goal #1: expand faculty resources for research

In direct response to a recommendation from the international accreditation team during our most recent positive institutional accreditation (March 2016) that LCC should plan “for the future institutional recognition of the importance of research by ensuring faculty receive adequate time in which to be research active,” LCC has allotted more resources – time and money – for research. Key examples include sabbaticals and group grants.

In the past two years three faculty members have enjoyed semester-long paid **sabbatical leaves for research** as part of their rank promotion. For example, Prof. Aušra Paulauskienė was on a Fulbright fellowship at the University of California, Berkeley (USA), for most of her sabbatical time. Action: the sabbatical policy is active and ongoing

Research and reading group grants are regularly awarded to faculty groups – seven over the past four semesters. An excellent example of such a grant is the “12 Week Research Writing Workshop,” which led five LCC faculty members to the following outcomes: for each participant to submit an article to a peer-reviewed journal using Belcher’s “write for 15-minutes every day” technique; to help foster a “writerly community” at LCC by purchasing a valuable set of books that can be used for future Faculty Writing Workshops. Action: ongoing

Action In Progress:

Formalize the application process – including productivity expectations – for **course release awards** (i.e. load assignment) for the purposes of specific research needs and requests. Date: implement Fall 2018

Goal #2: establish a specific vision and strategy for the further development of research activities

The **Research Council** established at the start of the 2016-17 academic year continues to develop and support scholarly activity and the research culture at LCC. [See Appendix I for a full description of the Council’s mission.] Its most impactful initiatives include: an intranet faculty hub for research related information and communications; collaboration with the office of institutional research to run a survey of the faculty about key research related questions; ongoing development and maintenance of the Institutional Research Agenda. Action: ongoing

In Fall 2017 LCC established a **research center**. The **Center for Faith and Human Flourishing (CFHF)** has a salaried Director’s position and a stand-alone budget. The CFHF marries LCC’s unique institutional mission and identity to research activity and faculty empowerment for scholarship. [See Appendix II for a full description of the purpose and agenda of the CFHF.] The Center has made an immediate impact on the research culture at LCC simply by its many public activities. **Scholarship visibility** emphasizes research as an essential activity of the institution. The appointment of two **Research Fellows** this academic year advances the work of the Center. These are dedicated research positions for international scholars working and publishing under LCC’s affiliation. With human flourishing as an overall **institutional research agenda**

focus, the CFHF concentrates that agenda with the subject foci of its own, which reflects LCC's unique identity and commitments:

Research Area #1: Migration, economic development, and flourishing communities

Research Area #2: Trauma, relationships, and flourishing individuals and families

Research Area #3: Textual studies, faith, and conceptions of flourishing

Action: continual support of CFHF ongoing.

Actions In Progress:

1. Increase the number of **Research Fellows**. Date – annual.
2. Develop robust **research clusters** for each of the Center's focus areas, with full agendas, clear productivity expectations, and cluster personnel that include not only LCC faculty, but colleagues from other partner institutions, including especially from Lithuanian and North American networks. Date – cluster teams formed by spring 2019.
3. Capitalize on cluster collaborations to bid for **public funding** – national and international level. Date – applications made beginning in Fall 2019.
4. Research Fellows compete for external funding. Date – applications made beginning in Fall 2018.

II. New Research Initiatives

Building a research culture and significant research output takes time; some of the current improvements owe their existence to earlier initiatives, and many of the ongoing initiatives listed in the section above are only beginning to demonstrate significant results. To remain vigilant in the development process, LCC seeks to plant several new initiatives that in time will bear fruit beyond merely the recent improvements. In particular we seek progress in research through research activity management and quality assurance. But the most pivotal and substantial new initiative is a committed focus to pursue opportunities for collaborative research networks and projects with national and international partners.

GOAL #1: more and better research-related metrics

Due to LCC's small faculty size and its status as a private university, benchmarking on the basis of research productivity at the institutional level can be challenging.

Therefore, one of the most pressing tasks for longer-term improvement of research at LCC is to develop metrics that measure quality in matters of research activity and scholarship such that we may better judge our accountability to our own goals and identity, as well as work together with Lithuanian colleagues from the Ministry of Education and its various research-related branches to assure LCC's contribution of quality to students, to the region(s) it serves, and to the Lithuanian higher education landscape more generally.

Actions:

1. i.) Develop **internal benchmarks for research**, rooted in standards of excellence maintained by schools similar to LCC in educational model – e.g. a publications-per-FTE metric; use these metrics to establish research productivity expectations that appropriately improve quality as well as quantity in institutional output.
ii.) Work actively and transparently with the Lithuanian Ministry of Education to establish **appropriate metrics to ensure the quality of LCC’s ongoing research** while not penalizing it for adhering to its educational model and maintaining a relatively small faculty.
2. Develop an appropriate LCC research **expenditure-to-productivity metric**, to ensure that funding correlates with productivity increase

Goal #2: more and better research collaboration with other institutions

LCC will create more and better opportunities for its own faculty to work in partnership with colleagues at Lithuanian and other regional institutions of higher education. But, equally, LCC seeks to create more opportunities for its faculty to collaborate in research related activities with North American colleagues. One of LCC’s greatest strengths is its international profile – in particular its many ties to scholars and institutions in the US and Canada. This broad North American network must be leveraged for research opportunities, both in terms of networking and funding. But LCC is also committed to seeking research relationships in which we are a bridge between other Lithuanian institutions and our North American contacts. As part of its international profile, LCC values highly international and mobile professors. As both a conduit for greater research activity and productivity at LCC as well as a means to more and better collaboration with Lithuanian and regional institutions, LCC will continue to serve as a favored location for highly qualified international (frequently North American) scholars, encouraging integration into our improving collaborative research networks. As a non-state institution, LCC can and should welcome international faculty members that represent LCC as well as other institutions. In this way LCC can contribute significant added value to the Lithuanian higher education context not in spite of but because of its unique status as a private international liberal arts university.

Actions:

1. **Increase networking** and seek more opportunities for collaboration with colleagues from **Lithuanian and international institutions** with the goal of entering into research projects that require the securing of external funding. Date/Measure – annual increase in the number of events, projects, and collaborations with Lithuanian colleagues and institutions.
2. **Each study area at LCC** must be involved in at least one **research-related project or activity** that includes other

Lithuanian scholars/institutions as well as wider European and/or especially North American researchers. Date: Fall 2019

3. Provide **LCC's international and mobile faculty** with greater exposure to and interaction with Lithuanian and regional networks of research scholars. Date/Measure: immediately; Increasing annual numbers.

Conclusion

LCC engages in research and fosters excellence in scholarship because it fits our educational model. LCC seeks to maintain quality and distinguish itself in research by building on the assets it already possesses, in particular its unique international profile. In their report from LCC's successful 2016 institutional accreditation, the international panel of evaluators addressed in the following way the challenge that LCC's model of a small private international liberal arts university poses for balancing research and teaching by urging LCC to take "the University's strengths and unique facets and mak[e] them the focus of a research agenda, i.e. interests arising from the vision-specific dimensions of the institution." To realize this research vision we are eager to engage in open and productive conversations with the Ministry and the Research Council of Lithuania to identify appropriate metrics which safeguard quality while helping LCC provide added value to the landscape of Lithuanian higher education through its distinctive identity.