



LEHIGH
UNIVERSITY

Redefine a Deeply Interdisciplinary Education

From the Strategic Plan

- All Lehigh students will be able to participate in boldly interdisciplinary programs and access the educational opportunities available across the university.
- They will embrace their intellectual curiosity, explore diverse academic programs and develop both the timely and timeless skills needed for long-term professional and personal success.
- We will expand intercollege programs for undergraduates.
- We will transform Ph.D. education to be student-centered and provide specific training relevant to the full range of Ph.D. career pathways.

So far...

- New intercollege (IC) program between College of Health and College of Business
- New space for IC programs in the Business Innovation Building
- Themed house for IC students

Next

- Exploratory first semester



Exploratory Semester

Why?

- Some students have multiple interests and are unsure of the academic path they want to pursue at Lehigh
- Some students have limited awareness of the range of academic and career options available to them
- Some students who don't have a clear sense of their academic direction feel marginalized and stigmatized. Reduce their sense of shame and work with their ambivalence.

Input

- 8 lunch sessions with 62 faculty and 39 staff
- One lunch session with members of the student senate
- Two faculty town halls
- Discussions with CCPD
- Discussions with interdisciplinary program directors
- Individual meetings with faculty and staff
- Ongoing discussions with Working Group (Undergraduate Associate Deans, Registrar, Directors of Student Retention and coordinated Advising)

Comments from students

- too much pressure to decide what you want to do
- encourage students to “embrace the ambiguity”
- “I was embarrassed to admit that I didn’t know what I wanted to major in, so I just picked the same major as my cousin”
- “choose the course before the major”
- “bouncing back and forth between advisors is unpleasant”
- More structure before getting to Lehigh to figure out how things work, eg. having schedule approved and advisor available during the summer before starting at Lehigh
- All the students asked for better advising
- Include advising on the first-year checklist

Comments from students

- “It is challenging for students in IDEAS or Cognitive Science to get into courses without a major”
- “How can I explore what I’m interested in without access to intro courses, many of which are only available to majors? All intro courses should be open to all students, especially the undecided/exploratory students”
- “high-impact programs outside of the academic curriculum have been the most valuable (CINQ, student senate)”
- “there isn’t enough flexibility to explore courses”
- “students should be able to do research, and early in the educational experience”
- “Can students sit in on classes? Encourage students to audit courses in majors that they are considering”

Priorities

- Students will not fall behind; they will be expected to graduate in four years
- The program will be accessible to students regardless of the number of AP credits they have
- The program will introduce students to the academic programs of the four undergraduate colleges, the IC programs, and the experiential learning opportunities as compiled through Lehigh 360

Suggested learning outcomes

- Communication skills
- Presentation skills
- Interpersonal skills
- Project collaboration and working in teams
- Community and global mindedness
- Organization and leadership skills
- Creative thinking
- Self-regulated learning
- Critical thinking
- Experiential learning

The developing program

- This program will allow incoming students to spend their first semester taking courses in the four undergraduate colleges
- Courses in writing and mathematics may ensure that students do not fall behind
- The program will be offered in collaboration with CCPD to introduce students to career opportunities
- Advising will be central to the program and will help students to select a college by the fall registration period

Some obstacles to Interdisciplinary Education

- Siloed units and colleges, college-centric structures
- Majors are too rigid, restricting students' access to courses outside of their majors and largely preventing them from taking courses outside of their colleges
- Advising - too discipline-focused
- Staffing/support mechanisms—faculty must be hired into departments