

Little Big Horn College: Substantive Change Procedure for Making Programs Available via Distance Delivery

Submission for Step 1: Institutional Authorization

12/1/2020

- **Distance Education programs are consistent with the mission and educational objectives of the institution.**

The Little Big Horn College (LBHC) mission statement emphasizes the college's role in the Crow community as a higher educational institution which offers high quality degrees, certificates, and programs for professional and personal development. Its mission is to preserve and protect the Apsaa'looke language, history, and culture.

In 2013 the college published three focused core themes supporting the mission statement and the educational objectives of the institution. These core themes drive all planning and implementation of the college's mission statement goals. As stated in the LBHC 2017-2019 catalog, the core themes are: 1. Access to Educational/Training Opportunities, 2. Commitment to Community Education and Outreach and 3. Dedicated to the Enhancement of Crow Culture and Language.

The degree programs and certificates of LBHC are aligned with the college's mission and core themes. This includes six associate of arts degrees, eleven associate of science degrees, one associates of applied science degree and seven one-year certificate programs. There are established processes at the college for continuous evaluation of these programs as well as processes in place for the review of curriculum and implementation of program changes.

In 2013, program learning objective goals were published on the LBHC website, in the LBHC catalog and on course syllabi. Faculty developed learning objectives to align with the mission and core themes of the college, while also establishing core academic knowledge needed to prepare students for further educational and career pursuits. These same course components will extend to online program offerings, ensuring that online education parallels on-campus practices.

Given the impact of COVID-19 on education institutions, it is vital for LBHC to expand hybrid and online course offerings into full online degree and certificate programs. Initially, when program delivery moved into online formats in the Spring of 2020, LBHC had no established online programs. Yet, LBHC does have a history of providing its students with some online learning options. The infrastructure needed to support online courses was in place; LBHC utilizes Jenzabar and Cloudram to support online instruction and learning. Additionally, LBHC faculty have been engaged in the development of online course offerings for several years. While the creation of these courses has not been systematic, it has been responsive to the learning needs

of LBHC students. Typically, online formats are offered if courses are in demand for student completion of degree programs or certificates and on-campus instruction options are limited. Faculty engage in rich discussion on the integrity of online courses, including the continuous assessment of online content and learner skill development. Faculty advocate for changes in the mode of instruction, while maintaining the quality of course content. There is clear evidence that online learning is a modality needed by LBHC students and faculty, so the expansion of online courses into full online degree programs and certificates is the logical path forward in strengthening the college's effectiveness in reaching its mission.

The realities of COVID-19 have motivated LBHC to create online programs that meet community goals. The local community has adapted to at-home work environments and in-home educational support for K-12 children. The community structure has fundamentally changed as Crow families adjust to the new norm of mentoring youth while balancing work responsibilities. There is a need for LBHC to provide educational opportunities that fit into this home-centered reality, where adults gain valuable academic and vocational skills while also working and mentoring their children from home. New online program offerings are essential to addressing the knowledge gap that COVID-19 has generated in the local community.

- **Distance education programs are integrated into the regular planning process of the institution.**

Online teaching became a formal focus at LBHC through the 2016 participation of LBHC in *Achieving the Dream*. Formalized inquiry into LBHC's vision of online course development became a goal of the college at all levels. First, members of LBHC's faculty and staff prioritized the future needs of LBHC. One focus described in LBHC's *Achieving the Dream* was establishing an intrusive model of advising. This model utilizes technology resources to increase faculty's advising communication with students and empowers students through self-registration via the Jenzabar platform. Additionally, Jenzabar supports the registrar's office need for a digital registration tool and record keeping database of student enrollment.

A second focus of LBHC's *Achieving the Dream* was to increase the college's technology use by offering online courses and programs to the surrounding Crow community. The Jenzabar platform supports this growth by facilitating online course delivery. Students can self-register for online courses and engage in online learning environments using Jenzabar. In 2018, LBHC set its standard goal on the development and offering of five online courses. Initial progress on reaching this goal was slow, with one complete pilot course developed in the STEM department by 2020. As a result of COVID-19, LBHC faculty quickly expanded online offering as all courses need to be taught remotely during the 2020 spring semester. As a new goal, LBHC is now committed to the delivery of full online degree and certificate programs.

The program of focus in this document is the Natural Resource/Environmental Science program. On approval of the online Natural Resource/Environmental Science program, other LBHC programs will be supported with the same information presented in this document. The Natural

Resource/Environmental Science online program was in development but with the impact of Covid-19, the program has been accelerated as LBHC moved to online. All courses taught at LBHC have been taught as hybrid courses or online courses since the end of the spring semester 2020. With this transition of all courses online, this meets the requirement of online courses needed to apply for a complete online program. The planning process that was currently underway before the transition to online included planning by natural resource faculty to build online courses over the time period of a few years within the Natural Resource/Environmental program Faculty developed a pilot online course for the program in 2018. The selected course was and established part of the program, as described in the LBHC catalog. The course was offered as a hybrid course in 2019, with online and on-campus offerings. Faculty received grant funding to support the development of an additional online course. This grant targeted the structured development of the Natural Resource/Environmental program and helped fund curriculum development of on-campus and online versions of the courses. The goal of the curriculum changes made was to support an eventual movement of the Natural Resource and Environmental Resource program to an online format.

- **The institution provides sufficient resources-financial, human, physical, technology- to support the distance education programs.**

Financial Resources: LBHC has sufficient financial resources to support the development of online degree programs. In addition to tuition funding, faculty actively pursue grant support for program support. To date, this has included operational funds based on Indian Student Count (ISC), various grants from federal, state, and private entities (a major grant being Title III), student tuition and fees. Students are also eligible for financial support, including the offering of scholarships, Pell grants, and traditional financial aid applications.

Human Resources: The necessary human resources to support online program development are already in place at LBHC. Faculty are academically qualified in their assigned degree programs and courses. All faculty members have participated in curriculum development, regular program assessment and necessary online instruction training. Academic deans will supervise program implantation; faculty selected to teach online programs will also serve as advisors for students enrolled in online degree programs. Adequate library staff are on campus and can guide the use of online research materials. Currently Informational Technology (IT) staff maintain Cloudram, LBHC e-mail services and provide technology troubleshooting support to faculty and students of the college. Student support staff are in place to facilitate online registration, financial aid services and student support services. Specifically, these personnel are located in the LBHC Registrar's Office, Student Success department, Financial Aid Office and LBHC Library.

Physical/ Technology Resources: Physical resources supported by LBHC include on-campus access to computer labs and campus Wi-Fi. Faculty are provided with adequate technology devices and students are eligible for computer loans. The LBHC Informational Technology (IT) department has prioritized the replacement and updating of computer hardware and software, as is evident by the department's listing of available technologies. While COVID-19 has limited some on-site access at LBHC, the college promotes open campus access. Faculty, staff and

students have regular access to classrooms, laboratories, computer labs and the library. Faculty are provided with private office space, though most 2020 faculty meetings have been held via Google Meet. Students have online access to Student Services and library resources. In the fall semester of 2020, faculty provided course instruction and learner support via online Google Meet sessions. The IT infrastructure on campus included the update and/or replacement of all computers in computer lab spaces in 2020. Due to COVID-19, older devices were made available for student check-out. IT continues to maintain the Jenzabar website, which hosts student registration, student records, advising services and online course platforms. The LBHC website provides continuous access to library resources. On-campus faculty support includes the use of updated computers, printers and recording equipment. Off-campus support includes Chromebook use, at-home printers, Internet service upgrades and hosting of campus-wide Google Classroom.

- **Faculty have the necessary skills or will receive training to teaching distance education courses.**

As stated earlier, on-campus faculty are teaching all of the online courses offered at LBHC. This is important because the practice has established a high level of academic instruction in online courses from the beginning of the process. The impact of COVID-19 accelerated the timeframe for LBHC's development on online courses and programs, yet faculty and staff at LBHC had already received training for teaching online courses. In 2018, faculty and staff were required to participate in Jenzabar training on using the Cloudrum program. Faculty have access to student registration, student transcripts, digital library resources, course materials and assignments using this technology. Also, in 2018 some science faculty attended a department specific workshop/training for online curriculum planning. In 2020, the full LBHC faculty took part in a six-week ACUE course on teaching online. Also, the LBHC IT department has offered faculty training in Google Classroom and online instruction. Enrolled students were also eligible for training on online access to library resources during the spring semester of 2020.

Future training will increase the faculty's ability to teach courses online. In fact, faculty at LBHC have specifically requested expanded training in online instruction (request submitted by faculty council in October 2020 to LBHC administration). Title III will support faculty in online training, courses, and workshops. Faculty are also applying for grants that fund training instruction online.

Additionally, many faculty members have taken online courses as professional development for their own degrees. Due to this work, faculty members are familiar with many formats and delivery methods for online instruction.

- **Operational distance education programming incorporated into the governance of the institution.**

Due to the close alignment of on-campus and online course instruction, the governance of online programs can be incorporated into the established governance of the institution. This governance structure includes steps for program operation, assessment and revision.

1. LBHC has an established on-campus governance system for current Programs of Study. This governance includes, faculty, administrators and a Board of Trustees.
2. There is an established sequence of actions needed for approval of educational programs and curriculum changes (published in the faculty handbook).
3. Online programs at LBHC have been previously and still are currently available for on-campus enrollment, therefore online programs will continue with this same governance system.

- **The institution's academic unit exercises oversight of distance education programs, insuring both rigor of the program and quality of instruction.**

At the academic unit level, faculty is the foundational unit to maintaining the same academic standards in online programs as on campus programs. Faculty is responsible for curriculum changes at LBHC at the course and program level. It is the responsibility of LBHC faculty to create and modify courses and programs so that they align with the overall mission of the college and supports the core themes. Program learning objectives and assessment measurements for student learning at the course and program level for on campus were established through faculty approval through the faculty council. Faculty has developed and approved the current policy of program review and is actively involved in updating the faculty handbook which outline the process at the institutional level, program approvals.

All proposed online programs at LBHC have been previously and still are currently available for on campus enrollment. Online programs assessments for insuring rigor and quality will be conducted following the same program assessment policy and plans as used in on-campus program review. This process is driven by faculty and follows a standard approval process.

Current program assessment includes assessment of the natural resource online courses for Fall 2020 and Spring 2021. This will be an initial run of the faculty assessment process for online courses. Online assessment of programs will include both online and on-campus degree offerings, as that was first started during Spring 2020 as a response to COVID-19.

- **Courses and programs offered via distance education maintain the same academic standards as those offered on the main campus.**

Online programs and courses at LBHC mirror those offered on-campus. The mode of instruction is different, but content, learning objectives and assessments are aligned. Additionally, involving the same faculty member in the instruction of an on-campus course and comparable online course will ensure similarities in the coursework.

In past years, faculty have used established assessment processes to evaluate online courses similarly to on-campus and hybrid courses. Pilot online courses have also followed this practice, as well as all course assessments done during the Spring 2020 COVID-19 move to distance learning. This established program assessment model has been utilized since 2008 and an updated policy on program assessment was approved by the faculty council in 2019. Currently, these two documents are used to assess associate degree programs and certificate programs. As online degree programs are developed, they will be assessed using these same documents. The universal use of the program assessment model and the updated policy on program assessment will ensure similar quality and adherence of academic standards in all on-campus and online programs.

At the faculty level, curriculum changes follow an established pathway of approval. First, faculty actively review curriculum effectiveness at the classroom level. Faculty are responsible for assessing the quality of content knowledge presented in each course as well as the quality of various modes of course offerings (on-campus, hybrid and online). Faculty meet in regular department meetings (Google Meets due to COVID-19) to discuss potential changes to course curriculum. Changes to degree programs and certificates are also initiated in department meetings. Grant work, which typically targets specific degree programs, is also managed during department meetings. In addition, full faculty meetings, where planned curriculum and program changes are reviewed, are held regularly. In fact, LBHC has maintained weekly full faculty meetings via Google Meets since moving to distance learning during the Spring 2020 semester. This digital collegial space has been an invaluable component of the LBHC transition to COVID-19 distance learning. Faculty have been able to share expertise and technology understanding each week, driving continued growth of LBHC's online instructional capacity.

Ultimately, institutional capacity for distance education has been guided by the college's involvement in the *Achieving the Dream* Student Success Action Plan. The quality of distance education at LBHC relates to regular professional development training, infrastructure projects, yearly strategic planning and LBHC's goals in *Achieving the Dream*. Professional development specific to online instruction includes training on the Jenzabar platform (8-9 Oct. 2018), Jenzabar advising features (4-6 Dec. 2018) and the use of Google Classroom (Spring 2020). As a result, LBHC personnel are familiar with the registration, online course applications and advising resources within the Jenzabar platform. The college added the use of Google Classroom in all courses as part of its distance learning plan for COVID-19. Infrastructure projects have related to the updating and replacement of computer technologies, the installation of the Jenzabar platform and expanded use of Chromebooks to support online course instruction and delivery.

- **On-campus faculty have a substantive role in the design and implementation of distance education programs.**

The on-campus faculty members at LBHC have a substantive role in the design and implementation of distance education programs, as those faculty members are the same faculty members that are teaching distance learning courses and driving all course and program

development decisions. LBHC's full faculty, including full time and adjunct instructors, participate in course and program assessment and continuous improvement efforts. As online courses are integrated into the offerings at LBHC, the same faculty member assigned to on-campus instruction of the course is identified as the instructor assigned to the new online course. This instructional overlap is intentional, as it ensures students enrolled in either format are receiving comparable instruction and learning opportunities in their required coursework.

The unexpected movement of LBHC to online teaching in March of 2020 due to campus closures and other community restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant and lasting impact on faculty, staff and students alike. Within a brief timeframe, all on-campus faculty were required to adjust their instruction to hybrid--and ultimately online only--models. Since that time, the LBHC faculty have engaged in deep and meaningful professional discourse regarding the academic content, digital accessibility and virtual potential of the college's degree programs and certificates. Faculty have monitored the situational stresses COVID-19 revealed in its service area communities and remain committed to the development of online degree programs that are well-suited to the Crow culture. Not only are online degree programs needed to address skill gaps and shortages in area jobs, but also to fill gaps in the diverse K-12 mentoring roles and technology needs of the Crow people.

- **The institution evaluates the educational effectiveness of each distance education program, including assessment of student learning, outcomes, student retention, and student and faculty satisfaction, to ensure comparability to campus-based programs.**

Enrollment numbers, student retention and student graduation rates will continue to be reported based on data obtained through IPEDS, AIMS AKIS, and Jenzabar. Baseline/benchmark measures were identified and reported with progress measures in the Little Big Horn College Year Seven Self-Evaluation Report, February 2017, submitted to Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (Pages relevant in report attached).

Assessment of student learning outcomes in each distance educational program will follow the same established plan as LBHC on-campus programs. The assessment plan that is currently used has been the same process since 2013 and was updated in a 2019 policy, then approved by faculty council. Yearly program evaluations will continue as scheduled in the faculty approved program assessment policy and will include all online programs without a policy update.

Student satisfaction surveys are already implemented on campus and are provided to all students in all course offerings. These surveys are collected anonymously, turned in to the Academic Dean for summarization, then distributed to appropriate faculty. This format will also be used in all online courses.

Faculty reviews are done yearly by the head of the department and academic dean. All faculty involved in online courses are also on-campus faculty, so faculty reviews will continue as previously done.

- **Students enrolled in distance education programs have adequate access to and make effective use of learning resources, including library, information resources, and laboratory equipment.**

Students enrolled in distance education programs at LBHC have access to the same resources as those of students on-campus. While some library collections and laboratory resources are limited by physical location, any student enrolled in LBHC (on-campus or online) is eligible to utilize these resources as needed by visiting campus. Additionally, many of the resources used by faculty and students of LBHC are virtual and accessible to any enrolled student. The college library provides virtual access to electronic resources, including academic journals and ebooks. Students sign in through the Cloudram portal to securely access these materials. In addition, student tutors are available through Title III funds; students can connect with tutor services virtually through Google Classroom.

Most course resources and materials are available to students through virtual means, for both on-campus courses as well as online courses. Students can access these materials by signing in to their active Google Classrooms. Faculty are encouraged to post materials regularly in Google Classrooms as well as through LBHC's Cloudram. These materials include assignments and supporting literature, videos, or recorded lectures. Students are also able to submit course work for on-campus and online courses via Google Classroom.

Although traditionally science laboratory activities have been what can be defined as hands-on only, there are many digital resources available to LBHC students. This includes easy access to data from online databases and scientific journal articles as well as data programs and virtual experiments. For example, the genomic database NCBI is utilized in a number of courses in the Natural Resource and Environmental Science program of study; this is in addition to the hands-on laboratory resources that are established traditions in the courses. Online free data analysis programs, such as R, allow students to analyze and understand the processes of scientific research without being in class physically. Also, there are many available software packages and/or websites that allow students access to virtual laboratory activities similar to those taken in on-campus courses. With the technology available in most classrooms, faculty can provide students with tours of lab facilities, access to classroom collections and recorded lab activities.

Additionally, at LBHC laboratory courses are not required to be taken in the same semester as the lecture course associated with it; therefore, students who are taking courses online one semester may be able to take the on-campus laboratory course during another semester.

In recent years, LBHC has utilized grant opportunities to purchase take-home kits for teaching ecology classes in the natural resource programs. These resources enable students to engage in hands-on research at a time and location more convenient to their schedules. This is particularly important for the natural resources program, as many students have restricted access to tribal lands and resources that would not be available to an entire class of students. Individual students are able to use their family and community connections to conduct meaningful research related to these honored places.

- **Students enrolled in distance education programs have adequate access to student services, including financial aid, academic advising, course registration, and career and placement counseling.**

Students are assigned an advisor at time of their registration at LBHC. Initially, freshmen are advised through student services during the first semester and then are assigned to advisor in the student's declared major. Through Cloudram, faculty advisors have access to student transcripts and can also facilitate students' registration. Upon enrollment at LBHC, all students are also required to take a student success course which provides foundational skills training for college work. Student Services and assigned advisors also provide career and placement counseling. While many students access advising services on-campus, during COVID-19, virtual advising expanded significantly through the use of Google Meet. After two semesters of digital interactions, faculty and students are accustomed to the use of virtual advising sessions as well as phone-based advising communications. Finally, some of the grants awarded to LBHC have supported student placement in research opportunities, allowing students real-world experience in their selected degree program. Covid-19 has changed the format of this research, but has not stopped student research in Natural Resource/Environmental Science program.

Specifically, LBHC has incorporated secure technologies to expediate student registration and support. Upon school acceptance, each student is given a student ID number which allows him/her access to the college's Cloudram website. Each student is also assigned a LBHC e-mail account intended to be used for all collegiate work and communication while the student is enrolled at LBHC. Students are able to initiate course registration on Cloudram; advisors are also able to approve these registrations through the platform. This has helped to strengthen the communication between students and academic advisors. Advisor communication can be done through e-mail, Google Classroom, Google Meet and Zoom, as well as on-campus.

- **Publication and advertising for distance education programs are accurate and contain necessary information such as program's goals, requirements, academic calendar, and faculty.**

Upon approval, the new online degree programs will need to be added and published in the biennial college course catalog and published on the LBHC website. Currently, the course catalog has an established format for on-campus programs; student learning objectives and outcomes for new online programs will mirror the format used for on-campus programs. The next biennial catalog publishing cycle will begin fall 2021.

Faculty make course adjustments and change approvals according to established precedent, as part of the continuous curriculum planning process at LBHC. The same faculty member will teach the on-campus and online version of each course, ensuring that content as well as learning objectives and outcomes are aligned. Faculty teaching assignments are identified on the LBHC website as well as in the course catalog. The academic calendar for on-campus courses and online courses will run congruently and are published in the course catalog, the LBHC website and on the Cloudram website.

- **Contractual relationships (e.g., Online Program Management (OPM) organizations) and arrangement with consortial partners, if any, are clear and guarantee that the institution maintains direct and sole responsibility for the academic quality of all aspects of distance education programs. Where the institution as entered into contractual relationships involving credits and degrees, it has obtained commission approval for the substantive change.**

None

- **Have in place effective procedures to ensure that the student who registers in a distance education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives academic credit.**

There are numerous features of identity confirmation used in LBHC online courses. First, students are assigned secure usernames and passwords for Cloudram at the point of course registration. Additionally, students are issued LBHC e-mail addresses to access restricted Google Classroom space and are required to attend scheduled instruction periods via Google Meets. Only LBHC e-mail users are allowed access to this digital learning space. Given the small student population at LBHC and its use of on-campus, hybrid and online coursework, students are known and recognized by faculty of their selected degree program. Most students take a mixture of course delivery modes, so it is likely that faculty and students have met face-to-face as well as in virtual environments.

Faculty use multiple engagement strategies to connect with students, including discussion posts, the use of discussion record-keeping forms, class-directed and student-specific e-mail exchanges (LBHC addresses only), regular phone conversations and weekly virtual office hours. These varied communication methods ensure faculty are knowledgeable about their student learners and can identify variations in the online behaviors of each student. All faculty have been trained in the importance of maintaining student privacy and data confidentiality, as directed by FERPA.

- **Have in place effective procedures to ensure the security of student records.**

All academic records are kept in the admissions office and are kept in confidentiality as directed in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA).

All student related information is kept confidential through secure storage practices, as outlined in FERPA policy. Student records are maintained in the Registrar's Office, with paper records stored in lockable cabinets and electronic records stored securely on the Jenzabar platform. Only authorized personnel are given access to either source of student records. Students are required to submit a written request prior to accessing their student records.

Only assigned faculty advisors have access to student records as needed to provide advising support to students. These faculty advisors are trained in FERPA practices and Jenzabar's advising applications.

- **Clearly communicate to the student that these processes protect student privacy.**

LBHC provides diverse access to its student privacy policies and its adherence to FERPA policies through the printed college catalog, the www.lbhc.edu website, Cloudram digital access and the student handbook.

- **Notify students at the time of registration and enrollment any projected additional student charges associated with the verification procedures.**

LBHC does not charge additional fees for verification procedures.