

2007-2008 LEAP Program Annual Report

Office of Undergraduate Studies

The University of Utah



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Introduction

LEAP had a great year in 2007-2008. In addition to offering 23 LEAP sections (same as last year), we piloted the new ALLY program during spring semester, acquired a wonderful new Executive Assistant, Leo Leckie, hired a new faculty member, Becky Larsen, to teach in the expanding ELEAP program, and, in order to strengthen fall-spring retention, reversed the sequence of semesters: the majority of LEAP classes offered 1101 in the fall and 1100 in the spring. This switch meant that students could satisfy two graduation requirements in the spring through 1100 (one humanities and the diversity requirement) rather than just one, as had been the case when the second semester was 1101, thereby



PA Suzanne Schmidt with a Guuleysi student

enhancing—at least this was the hope—the appeal of, and the students' motivation to continue with, the second semester. The experiment was a resounding success. With the traditional 1100-1101 sequence, fall-spring retention last year hovered around 64%. This year 74% of students enrolled in LEAP 1101 during fall semester elected to continue with the second semester of LEAP 1100. Overall fall-spring retention for the entire program was even higher at 77%. And it should be noted that student satisfaction with LEAP remained astonishingly high through this transition: 91.75% of students responding to the 2008 LEAP Spring Survey felt that their expectations were met or even exceeded by their LEAP experience! Additionally, 87% of former LEAP students who completed the 2006-2008 Survey of Graduating Seniors rated their LEAP experience as either “beneficial” or “extremely beneficial.”

Assessment of the LEAP program took a huge step forward this year with a new study of the program's impact on student performance. Previously, assessment had relied on retention and time-to-graduation statistics comparing LEAP and non-LEAP students, but without correcting for possible pre-existing differences between these groups of students. If LEAP students happen to be more persistent than non-LEAP students, as statistics show they are, it is possibly not due to LEAP participation, critics would say, but to the type of students—those with above-average motivation—who choose to participate in LEAP. The new study uses statistical matching of demographically identical students to isolate,

as much as possible, the program's unique impact on student performance, as measured by (among other things) GPA, retention, and time-to-graduation. The design and results of this study will be discussed in more detail below.

Three LEAP faculty—Dr. Carolyn Bliss, Dr. Carolan Ownby, and Dr. Jeff Webb—along with Mark St. Andre, Assistant Dean of Assessment and Evaluation for Undergraduate Studies, traveled to Dublin, Ireland, in June to present two papers on LEAP at the 27th International Conference on the First Year Experience. Dr. Bliss and Dr. Ownby presented on LEAP's groundbreaking Peer Advisor Program, while Dr. Webb and Mr. St. Andre discussed LEAP's exemplary approach to program assessment.



Thuy Nguyen and Jason Oneida at the PA Luncheon in April

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 fulfill the diversity requirement and two general education requirements (one social science and one humanities) and are linked to optional classes in writing, library research, major selection, and service.

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

The program set an all time record for enrollment in 2007-8, with 634 students registering in the fall, up from 594 students last year and—the previous record—632 students in fall 2005. (These enrollment numbers all include Architecture LEAP.) Moreover, fall-spring retention was up considerably, as



2007-2008 PAs

mentioned above. Of the 634 students who began in the fall, 478 students, or 77%, registered for the spring semester. This is a spectacular improvement over past years, in which retention has typically been in the low 60% range, an improvement attributable largely to reversing the sequence of

semesters: rather than starting in the fall with 1100, which satisfies two graduation requirements, we ended with it. Students were thus motivated by the carrot of credit. LEAP offered 23 sections this year, in both fall and spring semesters, same as last year.

- Fall Semester 2007. LEAP offered 18 sections of 1101 for 472 students, 4 sections of 1100 for 127 students, and 1 section of Architecture 1610 for 35 students. Of these 1101 sections, 8 were Thematic LEAP (3 of which were designated Service Learning sections), 3 were Business LEAP, 5 were Engineering LEAP (an expansion from the 3 sections offered last year), and 2 were Residence Halls LEAP. Among the LEAP 1100 sections, 1 was Fine Arts LEAP, 1 was College of Health LEAP, 1 was Health Sciences LEAP (first year), and the fourth was Pre-Law LEAP.

- Spring Semester 2007. LEAP offered 18 sections of 1100, 2 sections of 2004 (the second semester of College of Health and Health Sciences LEAP), 1 section of 1101 (the second semester of Fine Arts LEAP), 1 section of Architecture 1611



2008-2009 PAs

(Architecture LEAP), and 1 section of 1150 (the second semester of Pre-Law LEAP). 492 students were enrolled in total in these courses.

In addition, LEAP offered the following courses:

- LEAP 1050: Major Selection, a course taught in the spring by Martina Stewart from University College Advising, for 7 students.
- LEAP 2002: Peer Advisor Seminar for 11 students.
- LEAP 2003: service learning for Peer Advisors (spring semester only) for 11 students.
- LEAP 1300, sections 1 (Dr. Carolan Ownby) for 22 students and 2 (Dr. Ed Barbanell) for 2 students: service learning add-ons (spring semester only).
- Writing 1060-01: library research add-on for 211 students.
- LEAP 2600 and 2601: second year of E-LEAP Plus for 7 students in the Fall and 5 in the spring.
- LEAP 2700 and Philosophy 1250: second year of Pre-law LEAP for 10 students in the Fall and 9 in the spring.
- UUHSC 2500-001: second year of Health Sciences LEAP (fall semester) for 27 students.
- UUHSC 3000-001 (fall) for 12 students and 3001-001 (spring) for 10 students: third year for Health Sciences LEAP.
- UUHSC 4000-001 (fall) for 13 students and 4001-001 (spring) for 13 students: fourth year for Health Sciences LEAP.
- Two LEAP instructors also offered an Honors class, Honors 3060, spring semester for 28 students.

These enrollments are comparable to last year's, with the exception of 1050 and 1300, which were down by about 50%. Perhaps we need to do a better job of



Guuleysi students at the LEAP House

LEAP and to eliminate 1 section of Business LEAP, for an increase of 1 section over this year: 24 sections in all.

advertising these second semester courses in the regular LEAP classes during the registration period in November. See Appendix 1 for representative LEAP syllabi. See Appendix 2 for the Peer Advisor Handbook which contains the LEAP 2002 syllabus. See Appendix 3 for the LEAP 2003 syllabus.

Next year, 2008-2009, we are planning to add 2 sections of Engineering

Changes in LEAP

1. New Faculty/New Staff

Leo Leckie began as the new LEAP Program Executive Assistant in October 2007. Leo comes to us from his previous position in the Office of Diversity, where he had worked since September 2000.

Dr. Becky Larsen was hired to teach Engineering LEAP classes beginning fall semester of 2008. Dr. Larsen holds a PhD from the University of Utah in Political Science. Since completing her PhD, she has taught for several years in BYU's Political Science department. She will strengthen LEAP's expertise in Social Science.

2. Departures

Josette Price, the LEAP Program secretary for many years, retired in September 2007. A retirement luncheon was held in her honor on September 16.

3. New Teaching and Administrative Assignments

There will be a number of changes for the coming year. Dr. Kris Koford will be replacing his one College of Health LEAP section with another Engineering section. Dr. Jeff Webb will be taking over College of Health LEAP. Dr. Meg Harper will be teaching 1 section of Business LEAP, rather than the 2 she taught this year. Dr. Becky Larsen will be teaching 2 sections of ELEAP.

4. New Programs and Partnerships

The ALLY Program. In an effort to retain students at risk of dropping out of college during the first year, LEAP piloted the ALLY program in the Spring. (ALLY stands for “Advisors and Liaisons for the LEAP Year.”) The program recruited and trained 11 ALLIES, who were matched with 10 students, and has collected the names of 70 or so interested students for the Fall semester, when we hope to be able to offer an ALLY to every LEAP student who wants one.

Program Description: The program pairs sophomore students who have successfully completed a two-semester LEAP program with incoming freshmen beginning the LEAP program. The



Guuleysi students with LEAP tutor

ALLY is responsible for contacting or meeting with the freshman LEAP student at least once a week through the LEAP year. By means of this regular contact, the ALLY helps the student set reasonable goals; tracks the student’s progress; offers advice on classes, timely completion of assignments, activities, study habits, and other issues; sees to it that the student registers for appropriate classes in his/her second semester; and refers the student to appropriate resources. ALLIES earn \$200 per student per semester, and will eventually earn academic credit (one hour) toward the Service Learning Scholar designation

and/or the Leadership Minor. In addition to assisting incoming LEAP students, and thereby promoting retention and persistence to graduation, the program provides further leadership opportunities for LEAP alums beyond their first year, and in so doing, increases the impact of the LEAP program and the sense of connection felt by LEAP alums to the program and to the University.

The idea for this program grew out of research stressing the importance of the role of peers – both informal peer groups and formal peer mentors or advisers – in the success of college students and especially that of “at risk” students. More details are available in the “Proposal for the ALLY Program.” See Appendix 4.

In addition to piloting the ALLY program, LEAP maintained its existing partnerships with Horizonte School, Northwest Middle School, West High School, Crossroads Urban Center, University Neighborhood Partners, Neighborhood House, and departments and entities across campus.

5. Program Assessment

We continued to implement the assessment plan put in place in 2005, with one addition: the statistical matching study, mentioned above. Here are the current components of LEAP Program assessment.

- *Online Fall and Spring Surveys*, administered by the online assessment company, StudentVoice (for the results of this year’s surveys see Appendix 5). The Spring Survey asks a variety of questions about the year-long LEAP experience including questions about educational outcomes that we borrowed from the Survey of Graduating Seniors. The response rate to the Fall Survey was 33% (215 respondents), as compared with 28% the year before. The response rate to the spring survey was 65.7% (314 respondents) as compared with 51% last year. The high response rate in the spring is explained by the fact that in almost all sections students completed



Leo Lecki, LEAP Administrative Assistant

the survey during the final library session. The Spring Survey is discussed in greater detail below under “Program Assessment Analysis.”

- *Analysis of the Office of Budget and Institutional Analysis (OBIA) Survey of Graduating Seniors, or Senior Survey*, includes a question asking whether or not students participated in LEAP, which allows us to compare LEAP and non-LEAP students in their answers to the 80 odd questions on this survey. The questions we are particularly interested in are the 17 that concern educational outcomes. This will be the fourth year this data is available, which allows us to average the 2005-2008 survey responses. The Senior Survey is discussed in greater detail below under “Program Assessment Analysis.”
- *The Portfolio Study of student writing* designed to measure the direct effect of LEAP on student learning. We hope to have our first results by August 2008. (This study was conceived two years ago but has been thwarted so far by the difficulty of collecting papers. New strategies put in place this year will hopefully allow us to complete the study. A separate version of the Portfolio Study will be conducted for ELEAP specifically.)
- *Analysis of Fall-to-Fall retention of LEAP students* compared to non-LEAP students. The latest retention figures are discussed below under “Program Assessment Analysis.”
- *Analysis of time to graduation of LEAP students* compared to non-LEAP students.
- *Statistical matching study* comparing LEAP and non-LEAP students on GPA, retention, and time-to-graduation. The study is discussed below under “Program Assessment Analysis.”



Dr. Carolyn Bliss, Director of LEAP, speaking at the PA Luncheon

6. 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)

The Peer Advisor program had another fantastic year under Dr. Carolan Ownby's leadership. This year's cohort of Peer Advisors numbered 23: one per LEAP section including a Senior Peer Advisor who also functioned as a section PA. They met twice a month as a group and planned a variety of program activities including:

- *The opening and closing picnics*, which occurred on September 14, 2007, and April 11, 2008.
- *The Food Drive*, including both the Fall and February drives. The latter raised 1254.7 pounds of food. See Appendix 6 for a thank you card from Crossroads Urban Center.
- *See You at the U*. This event brought 100 potential first-generation university students from Northwest Middle School both fall and spring semesters to the campus for more than half of a day. Many of these students are from immigrant families or are immigrants themselves, and at least half of them don't speak English. The students, under the care of Peer Advisors, got to go bowling and take a tour of the Museum of Natural History. See Appendix 7 for a more complete description of the See You at the U program.
- *Registration help for spring semester*. Peer Advisors staffed computers in the Sill Center to help freshmen with spring semester registration.
- *Bi-monthly meetings*.



Dr. Carolan Ownby, Director of the Peer Advisor Program, with her PAs at the PA Luncheon

The Senior Peer Advisor, Rachel Turner, set the agenda for the bimonthly meetings as well as conducting them. She also organized and conducted a

mid-semester retreat for the Peer Advisors to help set goals for spring semester.

- *Staffing of the LEAP House.* The PAs staffed the LEAP House M-TH, afternoons and evenings.
- *Workshops.* The PAs organized workshops on various topics including sleep and giving presentations. Some of the workshops tied in with coffee hour in the Heritage Center.
- *Developed a My Space page for LEAP.* See www.myspace.com/uofuleap.
- *The LEAP LAN Party.* Peer Advisors hosted a LAN party at the LEAP House during Spring semester.

See Appendix 2 for the PA Handbook (which contains the syllabus for LEAP 2002, the PA Seminar).

7. Program Activities

LEAP sponsored the following program-wide activities in 2006-07:

- *LEAP Convocation, Sept. 4, 2007;* Keynote Speaker: Sharon Aiken-Wiznewski, Associate Dean, University College. A reception at the LEAP House followed. The Convocation is sponsored by a generous gift from the Ruth Eleanor Bamberger and John Ernest Bamberger Memorial Foundation.
- *Opening Picnic, Sept. 15, 2007.*
- *Closing Picnic, April 11, 2008.*
- *Fall and winter food drive* for Crossroads Urban Center, October 2007 and February 2008.
- *Child Poverty Awareness Week, October 14-20, 2007,* organized by Dr. Bauman and her LEAP students. This week consisted of a school supply drive to benefit the children of the Road Home Homeless Shelter and Neighborhood House, an informational table at the East entrance to Marriott Library, a conference on children living in poverty ("The Urgency of 'Now': A Conference



Dr. Jennifer Bauman with her Peer Advisor, Natasha Aguayo

on finding solutions for Utah’s Children Living in Poverty”) on Oct. 18, and a screening of *The Pursuit of Happiness* on Friday, Oct. 19. See Appendix 17 for the week’s schedule and the conference program.

- Program-wide lecture by Judge Andrew Valdez on February 7, 2008. This lecture on student involvement with poverty-induced social problems was arranged by Dr. Carolan Ownby and required of her students.
- Peer Advisor Luncheon on April 1, 2008. 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.
- LEAP Year Celebration. See below under “Student Recruitment and Program Outreach.”



PA Suzanne Schmidt with Guuleysi Students

8. Service

There are two formal service learning opportunities in the LEAP program: Dr. Carolan Ownby’s sections of Thematic LEAP, and Dr. Ed

Barbanell’s add-on service course in the spring. Dr. Barbanell’s class tutored at risk students at AMES (Academy for Math, Engineering, and Science). Students in Dr. Ownby’s classes are required to complete 20 hours of service (ten during fall semester and ten during spring semester) and are involved in the following service projects:

- *Guuleysi Project*. From the Utah Federation for Youth Website: “Project Guuleysi serves youth ages 6-18. Refugee boys and girls from Africa and new comers from other countries are the focus of this customized after school and in school initiative. These youth are at high risk for school dropout, recruitment to gangs, and other high risk behaviors. Named after the Somali verb for success, Project Guuleysi is about preventing these high-risk youth from finding their way to high-risk behaviors. Keeping these young men and young women engaged in structured, positive activities, addressing their academic needs, and working to strengthen their families is Guuleysi’s vision—a way to prevent trouble from finding these young people, and a way to help these young people find success—in school and life.” Peer Advisors tutored Guuleysi students

and hosted 17 students for a tour of the University campus. The tour included a visit to the Natural History Museum, a visit with the University soccer team, and lunch in the school cafeteria. See the UFY blog for pictures and description: <http://ufyi.blogspot.com/2008/04/u-of-u-tour.html>. See Appendix 8 for more on the Guuleysi Project.

- *LEAP to the U!* LEAP students met with West High students six times throughout the year, including “Shadow day” when 29 students came to campus for a tour, physics demonstrations, and visit to the LEAP House for a presentation on CESA. See Appendix 9 for information on this year’s program.
- The other two sections volunteered with ESL students at Horizonte for the fall semester. For the spring semester, students chose either to continue volunteering at Horizonte, or to undertake a separate project. That project had to meet the requirement of being service-learning tied to the curriculum.

9. **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. This year advising became 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.
- A 1-credit hour class, LEAP 1050, taught by University College Advisor Martina Stewart on the process of major selection, was offered again this Spring for LEAP students and will continue to be offered spring semester.

10. **LEAP Advisory Boards**

The LEAP Community and Internal Advisory Boards met twice each this year. The Community Advisory Board met on September 27, 2007, and April 10, 2008, while the Internal Advisory Board met on October 30, 2007, and March 27, 2008. See Appendix 10 for Board membership rosters and minutes from this year’s meetings.

11. Student Recruitment and Program Outreach

The following is a list of initiatives undertaken this year to improve LEAP publicity and enrollment.

- *LEAP Myspace page.* www.myspace.com/uofuleap.
- *The LEAP website: www.leap.utah.edu.* Completed for the beginning of the 2007-2008 school year, the LEAP webpage includes a short video about the program, downloadable materials such as the program brochure and assessment results, and a thorough description of the program including the various kinds of LEAP courses, along with individual course descriptions. It also features regularly updated news and events sections.
- *Fine Arts LEAP "Spellebration."* The students in Fine Arts LEAP, under the direction of Dr. Jennifer Bauman, worked with students from Neighborhood House and put on a dramatic production at the end of Spring Semester. See Appendix 11 for the flyer advertising the evening, as well as a letter of commendation from President Michael Young.
- *Revised Orientation PowerPoint Presentation.* The new presentation shortens last year's revised presentation to focus on the essential elements of LEAP. See Appendix 12 for a copy of the presentation.
- *PAs assisting with Orientation.* Emily Paxton, Rachel Turner, and Trevor Wright will be assisting with Summer Orientations this year, helping students sign up for LEAP during registration.
- *LEAP Year Celebration.* This is an evening for LEAP students and parents to celebrate the successful conclusion of the year in LEAP. It was held on April 17. In addition to honoring the achievement of LEAP students, we also announced the new PAs and Scholarship recipients at this event.
- *News Articles.* Many informative news articles on LEAP appeared in *The Daily Chronicle* this year. See Appendix 18 for a selection of them.

Milestones and Awards

1. Student Achievements

Four LEAP students were chosen as "Governor's Scholars": Colin McDermott, Suzanne Schmidt, Suneil Bhambri, and Thuy Nguyen. They were honored at a lunch with Governor Huntsman on April 15, 2008.

Brenda Robles, former Peer Advisor, was named "Young Alumni Association Outstanding Senior" at the humanities convocation at graduation.

Nicole Nguyen, graduating Health Sciences LEAP student, was named the Utah Young Humanitarian of the Year for 2008. With the award comes a \$5000 scholarship for graduate school, where Nicole will study pharmacy.

Erica Rojas was awarded the Latin American Studies Program Scholarship.

Shukaria Rajabali won the 2008 E-LEAP award.

Carla Suarez won the Williams Award for outstanding Health Sciences LEAP student.



Dr. Seetha Veeraghanta with PAs

Nicole Nguyen and Shontol Torres Burkhalter split the award for top Fourth Year Health Science LEAP student.

The winner of the 2008 LEAP Multi-Year Program Scholarship was Heidi Chamarro.

The winners of the 2008 Bamberger Memorial Foundation Scholarships and the Francis

Scholarships were Nick Gallegos, Andrea Garcia, Cynthia Pettigrew, Amie Richards, and Simon Rodriquez.

Cameron Fredrickson and Jonathan Bowen, both former LEAP students, received Kennecott Scholarships.

Suneil Bhambri was named a Presidential Intern.

Angee Doan, former LEAP student and ALLY, was selected to be a Presidential Intern.

Of the 24 students inducted this spring into the prestigious Beehive Honor Society, more than one fifth had connections with LEAP as students or Peer

Advisors: Natasha Aguayo, Danielle Kauerz, Nicole Nguyen, Giang Tran, and Elyse Woodbury.

LEAP alum, Brent Schmidt, won a Beehive Scholarship.

Health Sciences LEAP student Tuyet Nguyen was awarded a Kennecott Scholarship.

The three winners of Peer Advisor Scholarships for next year were Jessica Behl, Suzanne Schmidt, and Carla Suarez.

Suzanne Schmidt won the Frost Award for the year's Outstanding Peer Advisor.

The ASUU Government Relations Director, Marko Mijic, a former LEAP student and Peer Advisor, led a successful student effort to obtain state-wide tax-exemption on textbooks for institutions of higher education.

Maggie Hortin and Marko Mijic, former Peer Advisors, and Suzanne Schmidt, a current Peer Advisor, were awarded summer internships in Washington D.C. by the Hinckley Institute.

LEAP student Anne Bruckner qualified for the American Junior World Speed Skating Team, and will be travelling to China and Japan to compete.

Health Sciences LEAP student Kim Nguyen had a presentation accepted for the Conference on Undergraduate Research at UVSC on February 29.

Health Science LEAP student Christy Ma was awarded a College of Health Scholarship.

Two Health Sciences LEAP students, Shontol Torres Burkhalter and Deisy Ramirez Aguilar, were selected to present their research poster during the Research Posters on the Hill 2008 event, January 24, held in the Utah State Capitol Rotunda.

Shontol Torres Burkhalter and Daisy Ramirez Aguilar, former LEAP Peer Advisors, were awarded Assistantships through the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program.

Brenda Robles, a former Peer Advisor, won the 2007 Vicente Villanueva Meyer

Nicole Nguyen, Health Science LEAP student and former Peer Advisor, was served President of the U's Senior Class for 2007-08.

Natasha Aguayo, a former Peer Advisor, served as a Presidential Intern for 2007-08 and was appointed Supervisor of the new LEAP ALLY Program.

2. Faculty Achievements

Dr. Carolyn Bliss was named as one of five semifinalists for the Outstanding First-Year Student Advocate Award. This is a national competition.

LEAP Faculty member Kris Koford was named Volunteer of the Year at Crossroads Urban Center and was also elected Chair of the Board of Directors.

Two of the four winners of the inaugural Exemplary Instruction in Writing Awards went to members of the LEAP Writing 2010 faculty. Congratulations to Nancy Jensen, LEAP Writing Program Coordinator, and to Nona Brown.

3. Conference Presentations on LEAP by LEAP Faculty

Dr. Carolyn Bliss and Dr. Carolyn Ownby presented “Peer Mentoring: Making a Good Idea Better through Innovation and Assessment” at the 27th International Conference on the First Year Experience in Dublin, Ireland, on June 25, 2008. See Appendix 13 for a copy of the PowerPoint presentation.

Dr. Jeff Webb and Mark St. Andre presented “Assessing the LEAP Program: the Evolution of an Approach” at the 27th International Conference on the first Year Experience in Dublin, Ireland, on June 24, 2008. See Appendix 14 for a copy of the PowerPoint presentation.

Dr. Carolyn Bliss, Dr. Carolan Ownby and Martina Stewart presented “Infusing Effective Advising Into a First-Year Learning Community” at the 26th International Conference on the First-Year Experience in Hawaii on July 12, 2007.

Dr. Ann Engar presented a paper on developing the research skills of Pre-Law LEAP students at the Modern Language Association Convention in Chicago in December of 2007.

4. Publications on LEAP by LEAP Faculty

Although LEAP faculty publish regularly in their individual academic disciplines, they also publish on the LEAP program. During 2007-8, the following were accepted for publication:

Bliss, Carolyn, and Mark St. Andre. "Measuring the LEAP: Assessment Initiatives for a Freshman Learning Community." *AGLS News* 24.2 (Winter 2008): 5.

5. Continuing Education for LEAP Faculty

Dr. Carolyn Bliss attended a workshop on "Performance Assessment in Higher Education" put on by the Harvard Institutes for Higher Education, November 8-10, 2007.

Dr. Jeff Webb attended the USHE Retention Conference on March 5, 2008 in the Board of Regents Building, Salt Lake City.

6. Committee Work by LEAP Faculty

LEAP was represented on many campus committees, among them: Diversity Course Faculty Committee, Undergraduate Council, U Academic Advising Committee and Freshman Advisory Committee, Pre-Med Advisory Committee, two Service Learning Scholar Faculty Committees, Preview Day Planning Committee, New Student Advisory Team, Search Committee for Asst. VP for Academic and Student Affairs, Search Committee for Director of Admissions, Cooke Foundation Grant Application Committee, Undergraduate Research Scholar Designation Committee, Safe Passages, Monson Prize Selection Committee, and Undergraduate Council Subcommittee on General Education Requirements.

7. Program Achievements and financial support

LEAP 1100 was reapproved by the Diversity Committee to satisfy the University's Diversity Requirement. LEAP 1000 was also reapproved to satisfy a general education Humanities requirement, and LEAP 1101 was reapproved to satisfy a general education Social and Behavioral Science requirement. See the Appendix 15 for the approved syllabi.

LEAP was awarded a grant from the University's Instructional Computing Task Force for \$1800 to purchase a dedicated laptop for the LEAP House.

Support for LEAP Scholarships and for the LEAP Opening Convocation was renewed for next year by the Ruth Eleanor Bamberger and John Ernest Bamberger Memorial Foundation, for a total gift of \$8500.

An anonymous gift of \$10,000 has been received for scholarships to be offered during the 2009-10 academic year.

Retired Professor Janice Frost has contributed money to sustain the Frost Award for Outstanding Peer Advisor.

The College of Fine Arts has announced its intention to tie Fine Arts Departmental Scholarships and residence in the Fine Arts House to Fine Arts LEAP participation and to financially support the second-semester Fine Arts LEAP class project. It also intends to increase to two the sections of Fine Arts LEAP to be offered, beginning in the fall of 2009.

The University Administration has announced its intention to encourage the growth of LEAP so that it enrolls one third of incoming students. It currently enrolls roughly one-fourth of the incoming class.

Program Assessment Analysis

See the Annual Report for AY 2005-2006 for a detailed discussion of LEAP's plan of assessment (http://www.leap.utah.edu/media/leap_05-06_report.pdf).

The most exciting development in assessment this year is the statistical matching study being conducted for LEAP by Mark St. Andre, Assistant Dean for Undergraduate Studies, and Jeff Webb, Associate Director of LEAP, in collaboration with OBIA. The idea for the study came out of questions raised by our analyses of student retention and student surveys. The Survey of Graduating Seniors, for example, indicates that former LEAP students are more enthusiastic about their university educations upon graduation than are non-LEAP students. Is this result related to their participation in LEAP? Is LEAP helping them get more out of their educations? Or is it simply that the students who are already predisposed to get more out of their educations happen to be the ones attracted to LEAP in the first place, because that is what such students do: they take advantage of opportunities? The statistical matching study represents LEAP's effort to begin addressing such questions with what is, in effect, a version of a twin study. Twins separated at birth allow researchers to study the impact of environment. In this study we are endeavoring to separate demographically identical students—our equivalent of twins—at the beginning of college to study the impact of a specific learning environment: the LEAP year.

Before describing the matching study and its results, we'll first update the program's ongoing studies of retention and student satisfaction.

1. Retention

LEAP participation is correlated with higher rates of first-to-second year retention both for zero-hour freshmen (see the discussion of zero hour retention rates in the 2006-2007 Annual Report) and for all first time students. Because more and more LEAP students begin their first year with some university credit, however, we think that studying all first time students, rather than just zero hour freshmen, gives us a better sense of the program's impact on retention. The average difference in rates of retention for these first time students, LEAP and non-LEAP, during the 1998-2006 period is 5.4%.

First-Time Freshmen Retention Rates by LEAP Participation

Cohort	Status	Size	To 2nd Year
Fall 1998	LEAP	358	59.22
	Non-LEAP	2,293	61.42
Fall 1999	LEAP	415	66.51
	Non-LEAP	2,102	59.14
Fall 2000	LEAP	495	67.61
	Non-LEAP	2,092	58.50
Fall 2001	LEAP	512	67.39
	Non-LEAP	2,232	62.90
Fall 2002	LEAP	542	66.73
	Non-LEAP	2,259	62.47
Fall 2003	LEAP	560	72.99
	Non-LEAP	2,093	64.23
Fall 2004	LEAP	562	73.88
	Non-LEAP	2,207	67.13
Fall 2005	LEAP	595	67.85
	Non-LEAP	2,226	63.99
Fall 2006	LEAP	529	72.40
	Non-LEAP	2,309	65.22

Table 1: LEAP Retention

The data from 1998 is somewhat suspect because of the university's switchover to PeopleSoft's data management system. If we exclude 1998, the average difference is 6.47%. This table, as well as the one for zero hour freshmen, will from now on be updated on an annual basis.

2. The OBIA Survey of Graduating Seniors

Upon graduation from the University, students are asked to complete an exit survey. This survey, administered by OBIA in its present form since 2005, includes some 80+ questions that explore students' experiences at the University. One of the questions concerns LEAP: "Did you participate in the LEAP Freshman Cohort Program for first-year students, and if so how beneficial was it to you as a student?" This question makes it possible to sort the data according to LEAP participation and to compare the responses of LEAP and non-LEAP students, thereby allowing us to quantify the possible influence of LEAP on subsequent student performance and satisfaction. We are particularly interested in their responses to this series of questions, 17 to 34, pertaining to educational outcomes:

17. How greatly has your U. education contributed to your growth in accessing, analyzing, and using information from varied sources?
18. How greatly has your U. education contributed to your growth in acquiring knowledge and skills needed for a career after graduation?
19. How greatly has your U. education contributed to your growth in appreciating fine arts, music, literature, and the humanities?
20. How greatly has your U. education contributed to your growth in defining and solving problems?
21. How greatly has your U. education contributed to your growth in developing and improving your study skills?
22. How greatly has your U. education contributed to your growth in being creative and generating original ideas and products?
23. How greatly has your U. education contributed to your growth in developing openness to new and/or different ideas and practice?
24. How greatly has your U. education contributed to your growth in effectively using technology, including computers?
25. How greatly has your U. education contributed to your growth in getting along with people from various cultures, races, backgrounds, etc.?
26. How greatly has your U. education contributed to your growth in improving your verbal communication skills?
27. How greatly has your U. education contributed to your growth in improving your written communication skills?
28. How greatly has your U. education contributed to your growth in listening to and understanding what others have to say?
29. How greatly has your U. education contributed to your growth in reading with better comprehension?
30. How greatly has your U. education contributed to your growth in thinking and reasoning logically and objectively?
31. How greatly has your U. education contributed to your growth in understanding and applying math and/or statistical concepts?
32. How greatly has your U. education contributed to your growth in understanding and appreciating cultural and ethnic differences among people?
33. How greatly has your U. education contributed to your growth in understanding world and international issues (e.g., political, economic)?¹

¹ The wording on the 2008 survey changed from "How greatly has your U education contributed to your growth in" to "How greatly has your U education contributed to your ability to..."

OBIA presents survey results on a convenient website called the “Datamart.” The following is a screen shot of the first question from the most recent survey, 2008.

	Very Greatly	Greatly	Little	Very Little	Count(n)
No, I did not participate in LEAP	32.1%	53.2%	13.3%	1.4%	496
Yes, Extremely Beneficial	52.2%	39.1%	8.7%	0.0%	23
Yes, Beneficial	58.3%	29.2%	12.5%	0.0%	24
Yes, Unbeneficial	20.0%	73.3%	6.7%	0.0%	15
Yes, Extremely Unbeneficial	25.0%	75.0%	0.0%	0.0%	4
Overall	33.6%	52.3%	12.8%	1.2%	562

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Students have five options in answering the question about LEAP participation, represented in the column on the left: "no" (meaning: did not participate); "yes, [but] extremely unbeneficial"; "yes, [but] unbeneficial"; "yes, [and found it] beneficial"; and "yes, [and found it] extremely beneficial."² Student answers to questions 17-34 from the Senior Survey are then sorted according to their answer to the LEAP question. Students have four options in answering these questions: "Very Greatly," "Greatly," "Little," and "Very Little."

The 2008 survey compiles responses from 562 students, 496 of whom did not participate in LEAP. Of the 66 students who did participate in LEAP, 23 thought the program was "extremely beneficial," 24 thought it was "Beneficial," 15 thought it "Unbeneficial," and 4 "Extremely Unbeneficial."

Though the LEAP N is quite small on the 2008 survey—66—we now have four years of Senior Survey data, 2005-2008, the combined N for which is 308. Non-LEAP N for these years is 3173. Expressed as a percentage of all students graduating during those years, non-LEAP N is 17%.³ That is, of all the students graduating from the university during those years, only 17% of them took the Senior Survey. LEAP N, expressed as a percentage of all LEAP

² The 2005 survey allows only a "yes" or "no" answer to the LEAP question.

³ This percentage is an estimate because the total number of graduates, LEAP and non-LEAP, is not yet available for 2008.

students graduating from the university during 2005-2008, is 27%. A higher percentage of LEAP students than non-LEAP students, then, responded to this survey. (It should be noted that this higher response rate by itself reflects positively on the motivation and engagement of LEAP students.) If we have confidence in the representativeness of the non-LEAP responses to this survey, then we should also have confidence in the representativeness of the LEAP responses, despite the small LEAP N.

In order to discern broad trends in the differences between LEAP and non-LEAP students in their answers to the questions in which we are interested, we have combined those students who answered “Very Greatly” and “Greatly”—the majority who were, that is, enthusiastic about their university educations. The following pattern emerges. Figure 1 averages student responses from the 2005-2008 surveys to questions 17-34, “How greatly has your U education contributed to your ability to....”

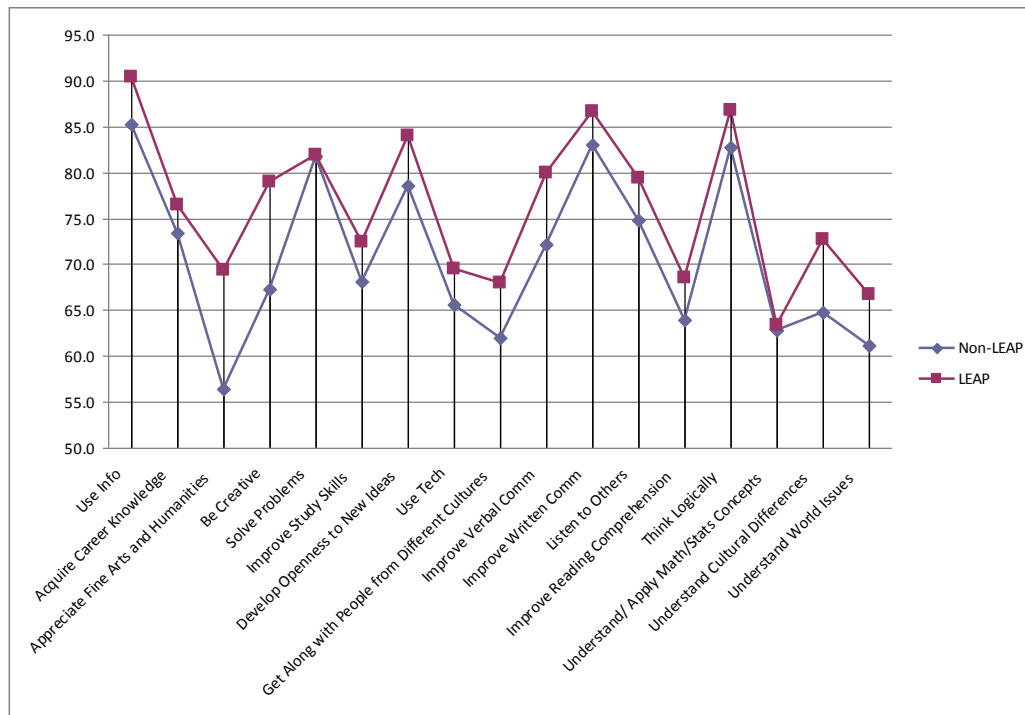


Figure 1: Percent of LEAP vs. Non-LEAP students answering "Very Greatly" or "Greatly" to questions 17-34 on the 2005-2008 Senior Surveys

(See Appendix 16 for a larger version of this chart, along with charts from each individual year.)

This graph is striking. University of Utah students are generally quite satisfied with their educations, but LEAP students are even more satisfied.

The average difference between LEAP and non-LEAP students on the 2005-2008 surveys is 5.4%, though on some questions, such as 19 (appreciate the fine arts and humanities), 20 (be creative), 25 (get along with people from different cultures), 26 (improve verbal communication), and 33 (understand cultural differences), differences are notably greater. On question 19, for example, the difference between LEAP and non-LEAP is 12.9%. That is, 12.9% more LEAP students than non-LEAP students think their university education helped them to appreciate the fine arts and humanities. That LEAP students might be more satisfied than non-LEAP students with these aspects of their educations is perhaps not surprising: LEAP is a small class taught by discussion, satisfies the University's diversity requirement, and emphasizes the humanities. So, while we're reluctant to attribute too much significance to any one question, these differences do seem to reflect the LEAP curriculum to a surprising degree, suggesting that LEAP may have had a role in the result.

This possibility raises a general question that, unfortunately, can't be answered by analysis of the Senior Survey itself: to what extent does LEAP participation affect subsequent educational outcomes like students' satisfaction with their educations (as measured by the Senior Survey) or their persistence to a degree (as measured by retention and graduation data)? Is LEAP helping to produce or merely benefiting from engaged and motivated students?

Admissions data shows that LEAP students are not much different than non-LEAP students when entering the university, at least in terms of academic achievement. In fact, their admissions indexes are actually slightly lower than their non-LEAP peers. (The average for LEAP students from 1999-2006 is 108.5, and the average for non-LEAP students during the same period is 111.) How do we explain the abilities they report on the Senior Survey then?

3. The LEAP Spring Survey

The Spring Survey, administered during the final library class in March, suggests that LEAP students acquire these abilities during the LEAP year.

The Spring Survey was redesigned in 2007 to include the 17 questions from the Senior Survey. Rather than applying to students' entire university experience, however, these questions on the Spring Survey concern only the LEAP experience. Figure 2 is a graph showing the results of the 2007-2008 Spring Surveys compared with LEAP students' answers to the 2005-2008 Senior Surveys.

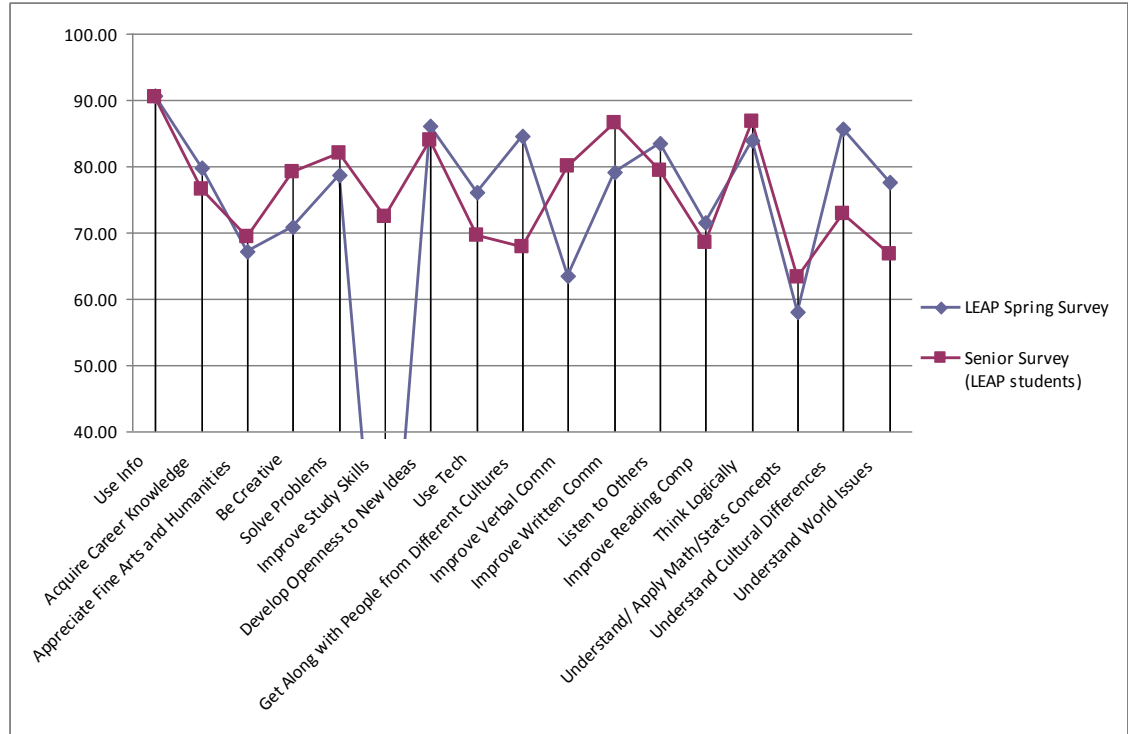


Figure 2: Percent of Students answering "Very Greatly" or "Greatly" on the 2005-2008 Senior Survey and on the 2007-2008 LEAP Spring Survey

Data are missing on question 6 (improve study skills) due to a mistake in the survey (now corrected for subsequent years), and there are some significant divergences, as on question 9 (get along with people from different cultures) and 10 (improve verbal communication), but for the most part the pattern of responses is similar. In fact, the average difference is less than 1% (.84%). If the responses were significantly different, then we would be inclined to attribute the Senior Survey results to some other, non-LEAP aspect of LEAP students' educations, either before LEAP, in primary and secondary school, or after LEAP, as they move into their majors. But the responses are similar, which implies that the LEAP year may indeed play a key role in how LEAP students assess their educations upon graduation and how satisfied they are with what they've learned in college.

The Spring Survey is suggestive but obviously not conclusive. It is possible that the sort of students who choose to enroll in LEAP, though not above average academically, may nevertheless be more motivated and engaged than other entering students (they went to the trouble of signing up for LEAP, after all) and would have found some way, even without LEAP, of acquiring the abilities reflected on the Senior Survey. What the Senior Survey shows, according to this line of argument, is simply the effect of a college career's worth of superior motivation and engagement, the first manifestation of which is paying attention at Orientation and enrolling in LEAP. LEAP thus would be seen to fulfill an important but not an

irreplaceable role in the educations of these students. The same point could be made about retention. Those holding this view might concede that LEAP students return for their second years at higher rates than non-LEAP students, but argue that the LEAP year may have nothing to do with this: the kind of student who enrolls in LEAP would be the kind who also tends to stay in school.

In order to address these objections and to better understand LEAP's role in both retention and student satisfaction we designed and implemented the matching study. This study seeks to isolate as much as possible LEAP's unique effect on student retention, GPA, and time-to-graduation by matching students who are demographically identical, thereby eliminating as much as possible differences in motivation or engagement. The study directly measures retention, and will thus confirm or disconfirm the LEAP retention figures in Table 1. The study does not, however, directly measure student satisfaction. The performance it does measure—grades and progress towards a degree—is at this point our best proxy for satisfaction, and the findings would therefore constitute only indirect support for the Senior Survey results.

4. The Matching Study⁴

The matching study matched three groups of students—non-LEAP students, LEAP students, and LEAP students who went on to become PAs—using the following demographic variables: age, gender, high school attended, cohort, and admissions index (+/- 5 points). The aim is to control for the impact of these demographic variables on student performance outcomes such as:

- First and second semester GPA
- First and second semester attempted and completed credits
- Fall-Fall retention rate
- Last GPA (all students, all courses)
- Graduating GPA (for those who have graduated)
- Graduation Rate
- Number of Credits at Graduation

Only some of these outcomes are applicable to PAs, obviously. We'll start by describing the LEAP/non-LEAP portion of the study, followed by the PA portion. It should be noted that we are defining LEAP students as those who have taken at least one semester of LEAP.

⁴ Special thanks to Mark St. Andre for his efforts in completing the first version of this study.

LEAP/Non-LEAP

One of the concerns with such a study is the availability of matches. Here are the LEAP/non-LEAP matches by year from 1999-2006:

Fall Cohort	Entering First-Time Freshman	LEAP	Matched
1999	2,431	412 (17%)	166 (40%)
2000	2,018	450 (22%)	174 (29%)
2001	2,568	497 (19%)	179 (36%)
2002	2,757	538 (19%)	182 (34%)
2003	2,476	549 (22%)	203 (37%)
2004	2,451	539 (22%)	186 (35%)
2005	2,636	584 (22%)	220 (38%)
2006	2,659	523 (22%)	181 (35%)
Total	19,996	4,092 (20.5%)	1,491 (36.4%)

The total number of matches is 1491, or 36.4% of all students during these years. The total number of students involved in the study is 2982. (For the purposes of this study, LEAP students are defined as those who took at least one semester of LEAP.)⁵ The number of matches surpassed our expectations and is more than enough for the study. Here is the profile of the matched students.

⁵ The number of LEAP students is lower than it should be for each year (though the discrepancy doesn't matter for the study—all that matters is that we have matches for each year). The reason the LEAP enrollments are lower than they should be in the above table is because of the selection methodology: the pool of first year students was first created by OBIA based on a certain definition—zero-hour freshmen. But not all LEAP students were captured in that pool (not all LEAP students are zero-hour). Hence, the number of LEAP students in that pool is lower than it should be based on the actual number of LEAP students enrolled. So, for example, the number of LEAP students in Fall 2006 from the above table is 523, whereas 594 students were enrolled.

- Gender: 53% female, 47% male
- Ethnicity: 96% Caucasian, 2.4% Asian,
- 1% Hispanic, .5% Undisclosed, .1% Black
- Age: mean=18.96 (min 18, max 24)
- Admissions Index: LEAP=110.0, Non-LEAP= 110.1

And here is how these matched students performed in the first and second semesters (figures 3 and 4):

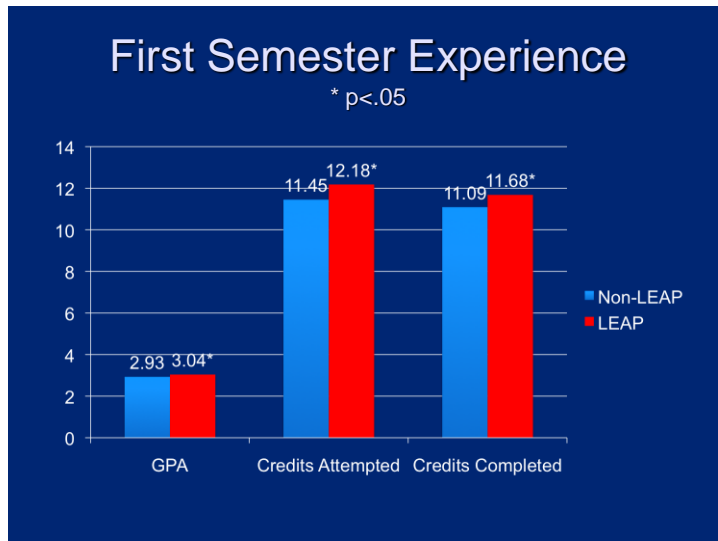


Figure 3: First semester performance of LEAP and Non-LEAP students

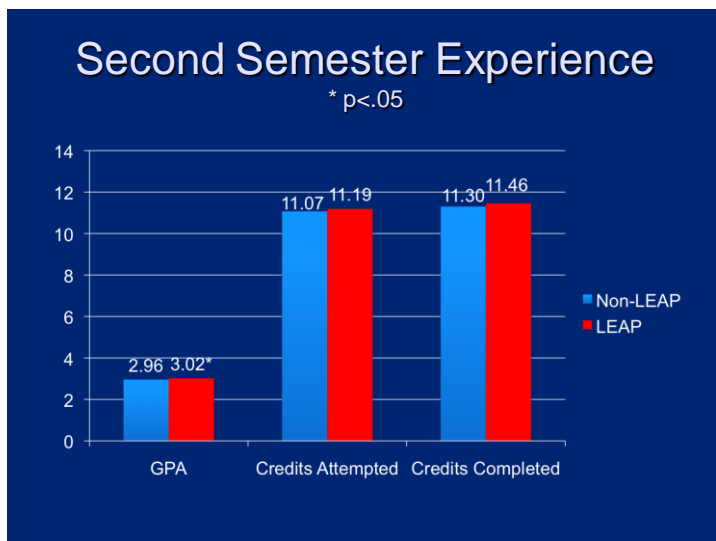


Figure 4: Second semester performance of LEAP and Non-LEAP students

LEAP students outperformed non-LEAP students in all measures both first and second semester, although the difference in credits attempted/completed in the second semester is not significant. (p=probability, in this case the probability that the difference between LEAP and non-LEAP students in these data is due to chance. The asterisks in the graphs denote those outcomes for which $p < .05$, meaning the probability is less than 5%, or 1 in 20, that the outcomes are due to chance.) Here are the results for retention and graduation (figure 5):

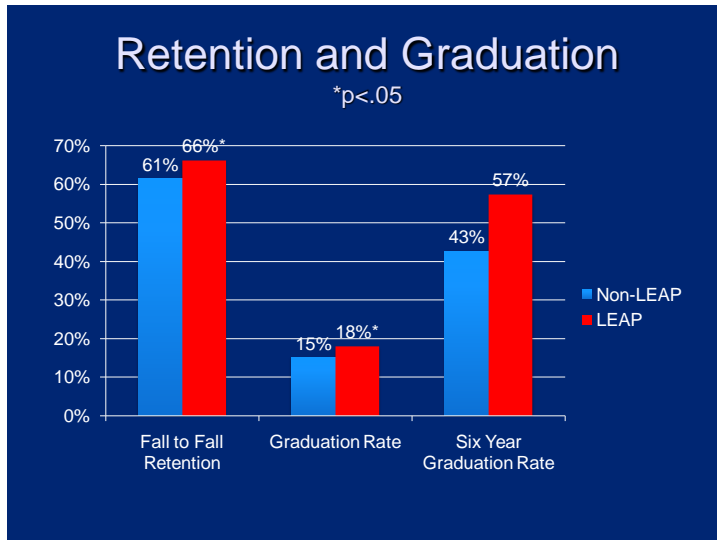


Figure 5: Retention and Graduation Performance of LEAP and Non-LEAP students

LEAP students return for their sophomore years at higher rates than their matches, and at present more of the LEAP group have graduated. This doesn't prove that more will graduate as time goes on (though that seems likely), but it does show that LEAP students graduate more quickly than their non-LEAP matches. In order to measure how much more quickly, Mark calculated the six year graduation rate. This shows a difference between LEAP and non-LEAP, though because of the low numbers—only the 99-01 cohort matches were eligible for consideration—the results were not significant. But they were close: $p = .06$. Here are the results for GPA:

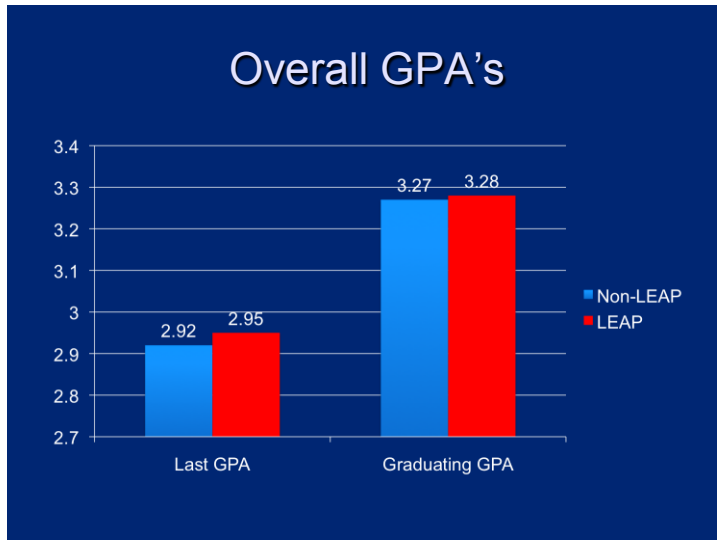


Figure 6: Overall GPAs for LEAP and Non-LEAP students

Last GPA is the last recorded total GPA for both continuing and graduated students, whether or not the courses were taken at the U. Graduating GPA is last GPA for graduated students. LEAP students were very slightly higher in both measures of GPA, but the results were not significant.

LEAP/Non-LEAP/PAs

The number of PA matches is 29. This is the number of PAs for whom there are identical matches among both LEAP students (who did not become PAs) and non-LEAP students. Thus, every PA is matched with two other students.

Though not directly relevant to our study, the first year performance of PAs—that is, LEAP students who went on to become PAs—relative to their matches is quite impressive. See figures 7 and 8.

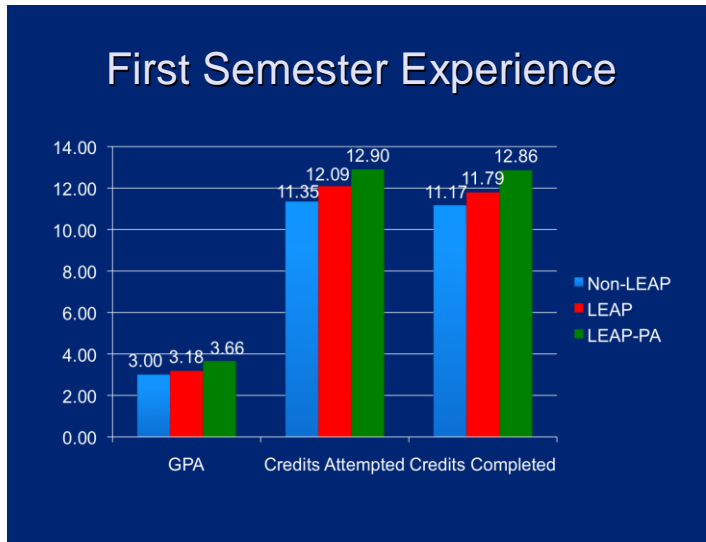


Figure 7: First Semester Performance for LEAP, Non-LEAP and PAs

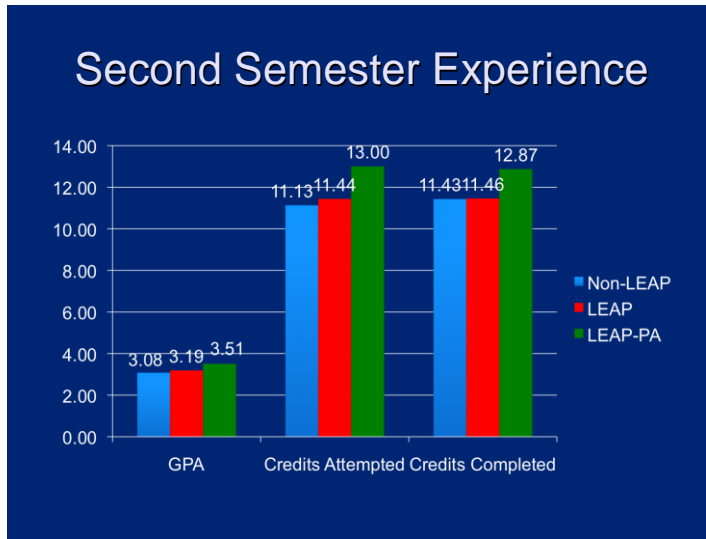


Figure 8: Second Semester Performance for LEAP, Non-LEAP and PAs

Even more impressive is the outperformance of PAs as they continue on in their college careers. Here are graphs for GPA and Graduation (figures 9 and 10).

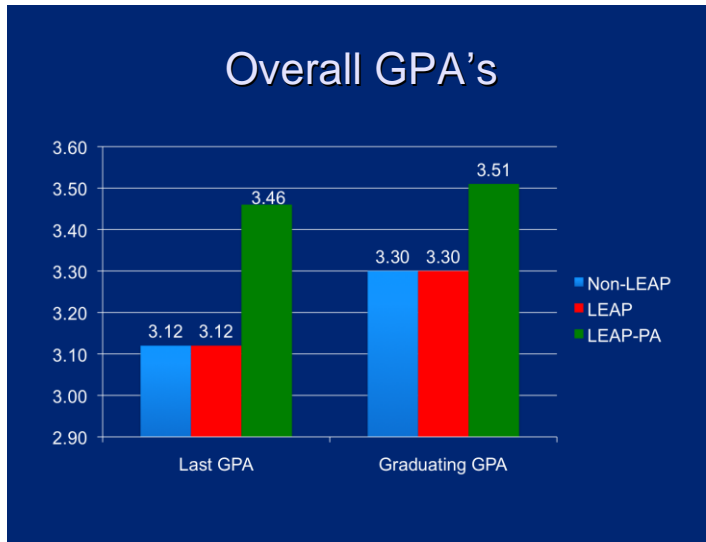


Figure 9: Overall GPAs for non-LEAP, LEAP and PAs

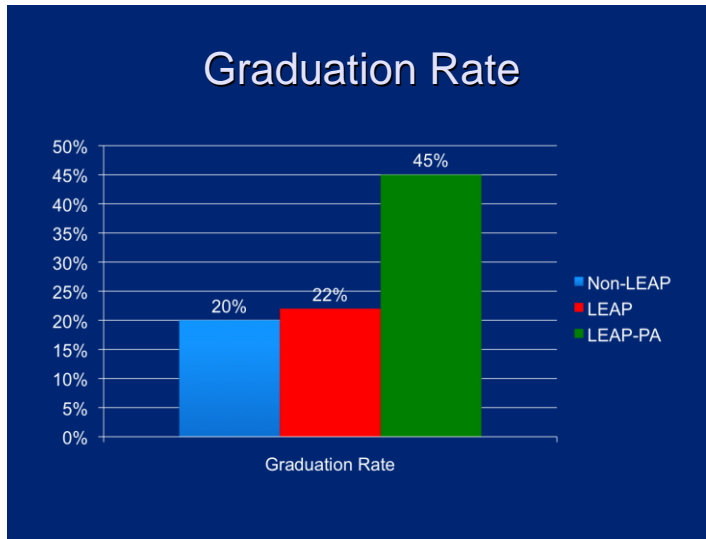


Figure 10: Graduation Rates for Non-LEAP, LEAP and PAs

Discussion

The first point to make is that the validity of the Fall-Fall retention study comparing all LEAP to all first year students in Table 1 above is confirmed by the matching study. The answer to the question asked above, “Is LEAP helping to produce or merely benefiting from engaged and motivated students?” appears to be that, at least with respect to retention, LEAP has a real effect. In fact, the impact of the LEAP year seems most observable in the motivational/perseverance domains reflected in retention and rates of graduation.

It is interesting that although LEAP participation is correlated with higher GPAs in both first and second semesters, that effect of LEAP—if it is an effect—does not persist: last and graduating GPAs are nearly identical for LEAP and non-LEAP students. The difference between LEAP and non-LEAP for graduating GPA was less than for last GPA, however, which is surprising considering that Engineering LEAP, which has been growing recently, and whose students are well known for having lower GPAs, should be exerting downward pressure on last GPA (but not yet on graduating GPA since the recent additional ELEAP students have not yet graduated). The fact that last GPA is higher than graduating GPA thus suggests that there may be trend of improvement in LEAP GPAs which is not yet showing up in graduating GPAs, and which may be bigger than it appears due to the possible masking effect of ELEAP. We plan to investigate this possibility in the next version of the study either by eliminating matches involving engineering students or by making major one of the match criteria. (This latter approach would have the side benefit of functioning also as a matching study for ELEAP specifically.)

In the absence of a general, longer-term LEAP impact on GPA, it is not at all clear what to make of the GPA differences between LEAP and non-LEAP in the first year. Could it be the case that LEAP's supportive community environment helps improve student performance during the LEAP year, but has little lasting effect on strictly academic performance? Or is it that the instruction LEAP students get in fundamentals—reading, writing, research—helps them outperform their peers in the first year, but that other students eventually acquire these skills and catch up? (In fact, in a sense they more than catch up: they could be regarded as outperforming LEAP students in subsequent years, since they start out behind grade-wise in the second year but finish at essentially the same place: 3.28 for LEAP as compared to 3.27 for non-LEAP).

The impact of the PA program on student performance appears unequivocal. PAs outperform their peers on all measures. And what we see in the graphs comparing the three groups—three levels of performance—corresponds perfectly to three differing levels of LEAP program involvement, as if the more LEAP experiences students have, first as LEAP students then as PAs, the better equipped they are to succeed in college.

We should avoid asserting this conclusion too strenuously, however, without more study. One shortcoming of the study is that our demographic variables may not produce perfect matches. For one thing, socioeconomic status is probably not captured very well by high school attended—East High, for example, is very diverse, as is West High. Zip code of home address might be an important additional demographic variable. For another thing, our matches don't correct for motivation. Though we would expect to see motivation reflected to a certain extent in admissions index (better

motivated students tend to do better in classes and on exams), high school performance does not always reflect a student's determination to succeed in college.⁶ We need a better measure of that determination to make our matches even more exact. The Student Readiness Inventory, or SRI, an instrument designed to measure student motivation upon matriculation, would provide that measure. The SRI has an excellent record, when combined with ACT scores, of predicting student success in college. The university administering the SRI to all students during the 2008 orientation. Adding SRI scores to our list of demographic variables will improve the quality of our matches considerably.

Nevertheless, the matching study represents a major first step towards understanding LEAP's impact on student performance, and lends considerable authority to the retention rates of LEAP students in Table 1. The matching study is also consistent with the Senior Survey results (though not a direct confirmation of the program's influence on student satisfaction), for we would expect students who stay in school and graduate on time to be also more enthusiastic about their educations—why else would they stay in school and graduate on time? The retention study, the senior survey, and the matching study all point to the beneficial effects of the LEAP program on student performance and satisfaction.

⁶ One clue that the matching criteria may not correct for differences in motivation is the number of credits attempted/completed by LEAP students in the first semester. LEAP could have no impact on credits attempted since students register for those credits before entering LEAP. This suggests that LEAP students are somewhat more ambitious than their matches when starting college.

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- Appendix 1. Representative syllabi for LEAP 1101 and 1100
- Appendix 2. Peer Advisor Handbook (contains the LEAP 2002 syllabus)
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