

Master of Arts in Leadership and Organizational Studies (MLOS) Program Review: Executive Summary

Process

The Master of Arts in Leadership and Organizational Studies (MLOS) program is one of the first Master's degree programs offered at Azusa Pacific University - University College / Los Angeles Pacific University (UC/LAPU), having been offered since 2014. It is one of two master degree programs aimed at equipping students with business and leadership skills.

A Program Review Committee (PRC), comprised of academic administrators, full-time faculty, adjunct faculty, and an instructional design expert was appointed in August 2018 to conduct a comprehensive program review. Following guidelines provided by the WASC Senior Colleges and Universities Commission (WSCUC), the program review examined program quality and program viability and sustainability.

The PRC's review of the MLOS program was based on analyses of student enrollment information; program purpose and design; annual learning results for the program; similar programs offered by competitors; student retention, completion, and graduation rates; student survey results; faculty information and feedback; market trends; and institutional resource allocated to the program.

Once the PRC completed an initial review of the program, external reviewers were invited to conduct their own review of the program and provide additional feedback which was summarized in the [External Reviewer Report](#). The outcome of this process was then synthesized in a [20-page MLOS Program Review 2018 Report](#). The summary findings and recommendations are presented below.

Findings

- In general, the curriculum, practices, processes, and resources align well with the program goals. However, there is a mismatch between the curriculum map and some of the courses in which PLOs are to be assessed. This will require a re-mapping exercise to ensure that the PLOs can all be adequately assessed. In addition, the CLOs for all courses should be reviewed and, where appropriate, the number of CLOs reduced to seven or less. The faculty, library, student support, and financial resources allocated to the program are all strengths of the program.
- As part of this review process, it has become apparent that the program would benefit from revision of the goals and outcomes for the program, primarily for the purpose of making the program more relevant to recent industry trends. One question that has arisen with respect to the impending launch of the LAPU MBA is unnecessary redundancy between the two degrees. If the MBA addresses organizational management and administrative proficiencies, the MLOS degree will benefit from the incorporation of the findings from the competitive analysis of other leadership programs within the LAPU cadre. In addition, with the establishment of the Business Advisory Council, a dialog can occur to clearly differentiate the merits and foci of both the MLOS and MBA programs.
- In preliminary discussions, the MLOS faculty have raised questions regarding a lack of diversity focus involving cross-cultural and global/international issues. It is apparent that the inclusion of diversity and gender issues is essential for domestic and global business initiatives and that this perspective should receive greater emphasis within the leadership curriculum. Similarly, while

there is merit in including such business school courses such as managerial marketing, information systems, organizational finance, and quality and productivity faculty, administration will have to redefine and (re)establish the program goals and outcomes for the MLOS program, and may reconfigure the curriculum to contemporize current leadership demands.

- As noted in the 2017 MLOS Alumni-Student Survey, the program seems to align well with students' expectations of the program. Students were particularly satisfied with the quality of the education they received and with the relevance of the MLOS program to their careers. The current students responded that they valued the convenience and faith integration the most, while the alumni respondents valued the instructors, followed by faith integration, affordability, and flexibility of the learning experience. In addition, the survey results denote that the MLOS program aligns well with the university's institutional statements of faith, excellence, and flexibility.
- Textbooks in some courses need to be updated due to accessibility issues related to older editions.

Outcomes

The alumni and current student survey (please see the *Alignment of the level of program quality with university standards and constituents' expectations* section) indicates that the graduates and matriculated students in the MLOS program are satisfied with the deliverables of their degree. As stated in the *Program Quality* section these graduate students have a course completion rate of 98%, require 1.69 years to graduate (on average), and have an average retention rate of 92%.

In a dialog between the Assistant Dean, the LAPU Institutional Researcher, and the full time faculty member of the Leadership and Organizational Studies program the topic of the average mastery rates ensued regarding graduate programs. It was noted the MLOS program mastery rate (which was established at an A- or better) was found to be 80.8%, while the MA in Psychology and Masters of Public Health were both found to be 66.4%. These statistics raised the concern that the MLOS standard may not be as rigorous as the other LAPU graduate programs. Student and instructor feedback, course design appraisal, and other data corroborated these findings. Further discussion is warranted to examine this result, and to remediate changes as needed.

In 2015 (see the *Currency* section) one PLO (#8) failed to reach the expected passing level of 80% (with a score of 78%). The second PLO (#9) exceeded the minimum level with a 90% passing rate. In 2017 PLOs 1 and 7 were assessed in the prescribed assessment cycle, and both PLOs met the 80% minimum passing rate. Program Learning Outcome (PLO) #1 achieved a 82.7% passing rate and PLO (#7) resultant score was 83.3%. However, the review team did note an evident gap surrounding graduate level writing proficiency, specifically noting that critical analysis, APA writing protocol, grammatical issues, and stylistic deficiencies needed to be addressed.

The Chief of Staff and Institutional Researcher Dr. Wayne Herman conducted a *MLOS Curriculum Outcomes Analysis* which is a preliminary PLO/CLO map, linking key course learning outcomes to program learning outcomes. From this analysis several gaps were noted within the MLOS program, and are noted below:

- None of the PLOs address the idea of understanding or applying leadership theories.
- None of the PLOs focus on data-driven decision making.
- Several of the PLOs (1, 5) tend to be introspective.

- The primary focus of PLO 1 is developing one's own philosophy of leadership, which is not reflected in the CLOs.
- None of the CLOs address PLO 3.
- Many CLOs highlighted do not appear to relate to any of the PLOs .
- The process of completing this exercise was hampered by the lack of a curriculum map for the MLOS.
- Several courses seem to have the majority of their CLOs connected to one PLO; it would be helpful to see a greater distribution of the individual course CLOs across at least three or more PLOs.

These gaps will be addressed and discussed by the full time and part time instructors and the Assistant Dean. In addition, a dialog should occur to evaluate the efficacy and appropriateness of the PLOs as currently configured. The Assistant Dean Dr. Lisa Phillips will determine the next steps in addressing the PLO/CLO map, and its relation to the program development process.

Recommendations, Future Goals, and Planning for Improvement

Recommendations

Updating the foci about the program

1. **Curricular distinctiveness between the MLOS and MBA.** This identity clarification issue emerged as a key theme and an essential element facing the course content of the MLOS program. The local and national curricular and competitive analysis conveyed there should be careful thought given to the key distinctives of LAPU's leadership program, clearly distinguishing it from the MBA program. This distinctiveness would provide clarity to the degree, promoting the market relevance of the MLOS program.

Recommendation: The Business Advisory Council should be called upon to speak about the contemporary needs of leadership in organizations, proffering curricular redesign recommendations to the Assistant Dean and faculty. Issues such as ethical leadership (particularly from a faith-based perspective), multicultural and global leadership, innovative leadership, managing in virtual settings and emergent leadership practices could be discussed and implemented to exploit market opportunities in leadership studies.

2. **Curricular distinctiveness between the BAM, BAL, BSOL, and MLOS.** From a retention standpoint undergraduates are encouraged to consider the MLOS degree for graduate work. However, there is anecdotal evidence that those who graduated from LAPU's undergraduate BA in Management or BA in Leadership programs are finding redundancies in concepts, assignments, even textbooks. There must be a clear approach and delineation between these degrees. Administration and faculty should make a determination as to the distinctives of undergraduate vs. graduate programs.

Recommendation: Establish an approach regarding theory and practice and its nuances at the undergraduate and graduate degrees in the business and leadership disciplines. Conversations

should ensue with faculty and administration, and the Business Advisory Council should vet the final outcome for market relevance.

3. Establish partnerships with various agencies. Brandman University has an agreement with the active and retired military personnel to accept 15 units of transfer credit for Non-Commissioned and Commissioned Officer training. Here's what it says on the Brandman University website (n.d., para. 4): "Commissioned Officers, Warrant Officers (CWO2+), and Senior NCO's (E7+) can earn a Masters in Organizational Leadership in only 7 classes." Other comparable transfer agreements could be established with other paramilitary organizations (police, fire, coast guard, etc.) or other agencies.

Recommendation: Work with faculty, administration, and marketing to determine if there are MOUs that can be created with appropriate partners and agencies.

4. Reconsideration of program name, Master of Arts in Leadership and Organizational Studies. In light of the aforementioned issues (curricular distinctives between the MLOS and MBA; market relevance; external partnership pursuits, etc.) it would be an ideal time to consider changing the name of the degree itself. Brand recognition and appeal are critical aspects to any leadership program, as universities with large advertising budgets (e.g., Arizona State University, Southern New Hampshire University, California Baptist University) are penetrating the markets in Los Angeles, and LAPU is essentially relaunching itself at the local, state, national, and perhaps international markets. On one website (The Best Schools, 2018) Azusa Pacific University College is ranked #11 on their list of best online Master's in Organizational Leadership degree programs, but with the university's name change digital traffic acquisition of the leadership major will be critical. Search engine optimization relies on key words for generating enrollments, and the strategy is based (in part) on the naming configuration of the degree. It is an opportune time to emphasize leadership studies rather than management principles.

Recommendation: Examine the name of the graduate degree to determine whether the name is still appropriate for the field. Exploration of comparable degree names will help to generate the largest number of potential students to leadership degrees. Conversations should ensue with faculty and administration, and the Business Advisory Council should vet the final outcome for market relevance.

5. Update the MLOS portion of the graduate catalog. Any revisions to course titles, course descriptions, PLOs, degree naming, or general catalog descriptions will occur as needed.

Recommendation: Any catalog revisions will be authorized by the Assistant Dean, who will collaborate with faculty, marketing, the Learning Design and Engagement department, and Executive Leadership Team as needed.

6. Institutionalize writing proficiency within identified courses. Graduate writing requires a strong adherence to critical analysis, APA 6th edition writing proficiency, and common grammatical constructs. It is incumbent upon LAPU professors to provide meaningful and directive feedback to the student. In this collaborative writing approach the instructor will guide the student through an iterative process in identified foundations courses (e.g., MLOS 500 Research in Organizations, or MLOS 529 Leadership and Managerial Ethics). This approach will allow the student to become proficient at (1) acquiring and analyzing primary articles, (2) citing and

referencing scholarly materials, (3) writing expediently and cogently at a post-baccalaureate level, and (4) preparing those candidates for post-graduate education (if the student desires to pursue that route). This iterative approach will also allow the professor to provide direct supervision and care for each student, and will address the employers concern that graduates should have stronger critical thinking skills.

Recommendation: There are several steps in this process. First, foundational courses (which should be taken at the beginning of the student's program) must be identified. Second, once these courses are identified they need to be revised to emphasize the use of one APA 6th edition style paper per course, with weekly edits discussed between the faculty member and the student. This approach will maximize persistence and retention rates for these students.

7. Establishment of a PLO/CLO Map. There is no MLOS PLO/CLO map at the current time, and this map will be critical for the redesign of this graduate degree. As mentioned in the Outcomes section there was a deficiency in the theoretical and applied components of leadership outcomes noted, a lack of a data-driven decision making process, and an apparent disconnect between certain CLOs and PLOs (e.g., PLO #3 did not display a corresponding CLO). Without a comprehensive PLO/CLO map any redesign of this degree would be hampered. PLOs should be revised and a proper curriculum map developed. Course learning outcomes should also be re-evaluated for possible revision.

Recommendation: Continue the initial progress of developing the MLOS PLO/CLO Map through the foundation established by the MLOS Curriculum Outcomes Analysis. This includes a dialog evaluating the cogency and appropriateness of the PLOs as currently listed. Once this map is vetted by the faculty, Assistant Dean, and requisite academic committees remediation can occur as needed.

Revising the MLOS curriculum

1. Most of the courses in the MLOS curriculum need to undergo a thorough revision, which includes the following:
 - Review and revise as necessary the PLOs (currently 9 total) and CLOs, for best alignment with the PLOs and curriculum map.
 - Standardized weighting of the requisite performance levels in rubrics.
 - Adoption of the GUELPH rubrics.
 - Incorporation of rubrics into Joule Grader in the course shells.
 - Updated course shell interface.
 - Adoption of plagiarism checking tools in the course shells.
 - Verification of compliance with LAPU's *Credit Hour Policy*.
 - Review for best practices in course design and structure (e.g., adoption of e-Textbooks and Open Educational Resources)
2. Establish an approach (e.g., scaffolded or iterative writing) that militates toward a proficiency in critical thinking and writing skills in specified foundational MLOS courses.
3. The course requirements for MLOS should be reviewed to determine whether any new courses should be added. More leadership courses should be added, such as multicultural and global leadership, leadership theory and practice, and innovative leadership. These courses could

replace some of the MLOS courses not offered at most of the competitor programs, including *Information Systems for Managers*, *Survey of Organizational Finance*, *Improving Quality and Productivity*, and *Managerial Marketing*. Either an emphasis could be created to select from these four courses, or new courses could replace the management-focused courses. Additional courses in leadership would provide balance to the program to emphasize the leadership component.

4. Curricular changes to the MLOS should be considered in light of the recent launch of the Master of Business Administration (MBA) program, and should be clearly differentiated from the MBA Program.

Future goals

As a result of this program review process the following goals have been established:

1. Clarify the MLOS program design, identifying the features and common themes that will permeate the program, as well as a revised list of courses and curriculum map. This needs to be done in view of the planned development of the MBA program.
2. Establish a priority list and schedule to refresh or replace all of the program requisites and major requirement courses in the program by the end of FY 2020.
3. Incorporate the LAPU program standards identified above into all MLOS courses as part of the revision process.
4. Strategically redesign fundamental courses to incorporate an iterative approach to graduate writing. One paper would be utilized throughout the term with continuous and salient feedback provided to the students.

Improvement plans

In order to achieve these goals, the following steps have been taken:

- Dr. Lisa Phillips (PhD in business management) has been appointed as the new Assistant Dean as of September 3, 2017, with oversight responsibility for the BAM, BAL, BSIS, and MLOS programs. She has also been tasked with facilitating the design and development of the BSSCM and MBA programs. Dr. Phillips will also lead the MLOS curriculum revision process [i.e., leading the process to clarify program design, identifying and appointing Subject Matter Consultants (SMCs), etc.].
- Establish an MLOS Curriculum Development Budget for the revision of existing courses. The FY 2020 Curriculum Development Budget should include funding for any new MLOS courses that are added as a result of recommended curricular changes.
- A *Credit Hour Policy* was recently approved by CAPC and AC, which will guide the design of learning activities in the revised/new MLOS courses.
- The Learning Design and Engagement department in collaboration with the Assistant Deans has established an institutional workflow process for the revision of courses that ensures all of the LAPU standards are adequately addressed in the curriculum revision process.

Self-Study and External Reviewer Reports: Response to Recommendations

Self-Study Recommendations	Response to Recommendation
<p>Establish curricular distinctiveness between MLOS and MBA programs. Allow the Business Advisory Council to offer curricular design recommendations relative to employer needs for leadership in organizations. Issues such as ethical leadership (particularly from a faith-based perspective), multicultural and global leadership, innovative leadership, managing in virtual settings and emergent leadership practices could be discussed and implemented to exploit market opportunities in leadership studies.</p>	<p>Target completion date: End of FY 2019</p>
<p>Provide clear delineation between undergraduate and graduate degree programs. Establish an approach regarding theory and practice and its nuances at the undergraduate and graduate degrees in the business and leadership disciplines.</p>	<p>In process: The MBA program is currently under development and the BAM program is currently undergoing a major revision. The MLOS program will be scheduled for revision in the upcoming fiscal year. In addition, the BAM program course mix has been changed to align with a BBA (Bachelor in Business Administration) with a goal to change the name from BAM to BBA effective Fall I 2019. The BAL program will be sunsetted.</p>
<p>Work with faculty, administration, and marketing to determine if there are MOUs that can be created to establish partnerships with appropriate organizations or agencies.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Examine the name of the graduate degree to determine whether the name is still appropriate for the field. Exploration of comparable degree names will help to generate the largest number of potential students to leadership degrees. Conversations should ensue with faculty and administration, and the Business Advisory Council should vet the final outcome for market relevance.</p>	<p>Target completion date: End of FY 2019</p>
<p>Establish an approach (e.g., scaffolded or iterative writing) that militates toward a proficiency in critical</p>	<p>This will occur as part of the program revision process. Target completion date: End of FY 2020</p>

thinking and writing skills in specified foundational MLOS courses.	
The course requirements for MLOS should be reviewed to determine whether any new courses should be added. More leadership courses should be added, such as multicultural and global leadership, leadership theory and practice, and innovative leadership. These courses could replace some of the MLOS courses not offered at most of the competitor programs, including <i>Information Systems for Managers</i> , <i>Survey of Organizational Finance</i> , <i>Improving Quality and Productivity</i> , and <i>Managerial Marketing</i> .	Target completion date: End of FY 2020
Continue the initial progress of developing the MLOS PLO/CLO Map through the foundation established by the MLOS Curriculum Outcomes Analysis.	Target completion date: End of FY 2019
Consider curricular changes to the MLOS in light of the recent launch of the Master of Business Administration (MBA) program. MLOS should be clearly differentiated from the MBA Program.	In process: Target completion date: End of FY 2020
External Reviewer Report Recommendations	Response to Recommendation
Create a mission statement.	Chief Academic Officer, Dr. Wayne Herman has provided an initial draft of a mission statement for the MLOS Program. Target completion date: End of FY 2019
Communicate one major leadership theme throughout the program.	Target completion date: End of FY 2020
Drop the marketing class and add two classes.	Target completion date: End of FY 2020
Change the program name to Master of Arts in Leadership Studies.	Target completion date: End of FY 2019
Revision [and alignment] of PLO/CLOs. Address any gaps in curriculum maps.	Target completion date: End of FY 2019
Continued focus on emphasizing points of distinction between the MBA degree and MLOS degree especially in marketing the program to potential students.	In process

Continued emphasis on marketing efforts and potential partnerships with business and military	Ongoing
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Goals

Goal Recommendations	Response to Recommendation
Clarify the MLOS program design, identifying the features and common themes that will permeate the program, as well as a revised list of courses and curriculum map.	Target completion date: End of FY 2020
Establish a priority list and schedule to refresh or replace all of the program requisites and major requirement courses in the program by the end of FY 2020.	The FY 2019 Curriculum Development Budget should include \$1,800 per course for the revision/refresh of 12 MLOS courses by the end of FY 2020.
Allow Business Advisory Council comprised of business professionals and academic subject matter experts to provide input into the program design process.	Target completion date: End of FY 2019
Strategically redesign fundamental courses to incorporate an iterative approach to graduate writing. One paper would be utilized throughout the term with continuous and salient feedback provided to the students.	Target completion date: End of FY 2020