AY 2009-10 Annual Report for the Enrollment Planning Committee

The Enrollment Planning Committee met a dozen times this academic year, including its eight monthly meetings, to discuss a wide range of topics related to its charge (Faculty Handbook Section 5.4.3.7.1). What follows is a necessarily abbreviated account of the committee’s many conversations and activities. In addition, a three-page appendix to this report comprises an initial review of the Posse Scholars program at Lafayette, including a recommendation addressed to several campus administrative offices.

Early in the fall, the committee held an open meeting on changes to the Marquis Scholar program that were endorsed by last year’s committee; six resulting recommendations were approved by the Faculty at its December meeting. This spring, preliminary data suggest that the recommendation to broaden the selection criteria has already been implemented well, as the Marquis Scholar class of 2014 appears to be more diverse in several ways (academic interests, ethnicity, geography).

In the fall, the committee prepared a first annual report on the profile of admitted and enrolled students, which was presented to the Faculty at its November meeting. Also in the fall, the committee discussed several trial revisions to the financial aid program introduced by Bob Massa in an effort to reduce financial aid expenditures while not adversely affecting access. These changes were reported to the Faculty at its December meeting; the effectiveness of these changes should be considered by next year’s committee in the early fall.

In the spring, Shirley Ramirez and Bob Massa led a discussion for the committee entitled “Beyond Traditional Admissions Criteria: Options for the Future.” In preparation for the discussion, committee members read several chapters of Crossing the Finish Line, a new book by William Bowen, Matthew Chingos, and Michael McPherson that studies determinants of academic success in college, including race, gender, and socioeconomic status. The committee identified some first possibilities for alternative selection methods, including group interviews, articulation agreements with regional community colleges, and changes to Lafayette’s supplemental application form.

At our final meeting of the year, the committee discussed with concern the surprisingly large class of first-year students projected to enroll at Lafayette in the fall.
The committee welcomed several visitors to its meetings. Chawne Kimber visited in the fall to introduce the committee to SPAL (Summer Program to Advance Leadership), a bridge program for eight incoming students interested in STEM disciplines that ran for the first time during the summer of 2009. President Weiss visited in the early spring to discuss the upcoming summer vote among Patriot League presidents on football scholarships. Jim Schafer and Simon Tonev of the Office of Institutional Research visited in the fall to assist with the presentation of the trial financial aid revisions; Simon then returned in the spring to assist with our initial review of the Posse Scholars.

The committee held two special meetings to consider the admission of students with academic ratings of 7. Two members of the committee served on the hiring committee for the new Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid, and three members participated in a breakfast meeting for the Greek Life external review. The chair of the committee attended two meetings of the Administrative Enrollment Planning Committee and two meetings to consider student-athlete appeals.

Respectfully submitted,

Jamila Bookwala
Arlina DeNardo, ex officio
Markus Dubischar
Jerry Heavey
Fluney Hutchinson, ex officio, Diversity Committee liaison
Piyal Hyder, ‘10
Ismail Jouny
Bob Massa, ex officio
Carol Rowlands, ex officio
Derek Smith, chair
Julie Smith
Daniel Stefan, ‘10

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Appendix: Initial Review of the Posse Program

In accordance with the charge stated in Section 5.4.3.7.1 of the Faculty Handbook, the Enrollment Planning Committee has been conducting reviews of Lafayette’s admissions policy and programs. During the 2007-08 academic year EPC reviewed the Trustee Scholarship program; last year EPC reviewed the Marquis Scholarship program; and this spring it began a review of the Posse program.

The goals of the Posse program, as stated by the Posse Foundation, are:

- To expand the pool from which top colleges and universities can recruit outstanding young leaders from diverse backgrounds.
- To help these institutions build more interactive campus environments so that they can be more welcoming for people from all backgrounds.
- To ensure that Posse Scholars persist in their academic studies and graduate, so they can take on leadership positions in the workforce.

Since 1989, Posse has sent over 3000 Scholars to colleges and universities around the country, including 37 current partner institutions. More information on the Posse Foundation can be found at www.possefoundation.org.

Lafayette’s relationship with the Posse Foundation began in academic year 2001-02, with the first Posse arriving on campus from New York City in the fall of 2002. The first Posse from Washington, D.C., arrived in the fall of 2006, so that eight different Posse classes are enrolled at the College this academic year, with the fifth Posse class from New York and the first Posse class from D.C. graduating in May.

Early in each fall semester, high schools and community-based organizations nominate students to be Posse Scholars based on demonstrated leadership and academic potential and interest in teamwork and diversity. Later in the fall, the Posse Foundation determines for Lafayette a group of roughly two dozen student finalists from each city. A group of Lafayette faculty and staff then travel to each city to meet the finalists and select the 10-12 students who will comprise each Posse. Schools that partner with Posse also have exclusive access to Posse Access, an online database of unselected student finalists nationwide.

This spring, EPC generated an initial list of questions to ask about the Posse program on campus, including comparisons of Posse and non-Posse
students with respect to standard indicators of academic success, such as graduation rates and GPAs, as well as to chosen majors, financial aid need levels, and certain demographic information. We also posed questions related to the stated goals of the Posse program, including leadership and post-graduate success. We began working with the Office of Institutional Research to get answers to these questions, a sample of which are provided later in this appendix.

Unfortunately, OIR does not have easy access to information addressing some of our questions, simply because some campus offices that collect the relevant data do not use Banner for their student records. With the goal of completing our study of the Posse program next fall aided by as much useful data as possible,

**EPC recommends that offices around campus work with OIR over the summer to make information in their separate databases available to OIR in a suitable format. In particular, EPC is interested in which students over the past 8 years have been resident advisors, held offices in student organizations, won fellowships/scholarships, made Dean’s lists, were EXCEL Scholars, were employed after graduation/hold current employment (including general type of employment, if available), and went on to graduate school.**

Ideally, relevant information in these databases would be incorporated into Banner. If this is not possible, at a minimum campus offices should work with OIR to ensure that their separate databases incorporate (a) a field for student **L-numbers** in student records and (b) standard **campus codes** (e.g. PSTD = Policy Studies).

Below is a sample of some of the data EPC has collected on Posse Scholars at Lafayette. (At this point, we make no claim regarding the statistical significance of any of the statements below.)

- 133 Scholars have enrolled at Lafayette over the past eight years: 90 from New York, and 43 from Washington, D.C.

- Each Scholar receives a four-year, full-tuition scholarship, regardless of need. The median first-semester need level of all Scholars lies in the range $30,001 to $35,000.
• Scholars are less likely to have ever been involved in Greek Life (15% vs. 37%) and Division I sports (5% vs. 31%) than other students in the 8-year comparison group. No Scholars have been coach-supported applicants.

• Comparing Scholars with other students who have the same admissions academic rating (AR), we see comparable cumulative GPAs after the student’s 8th semester:

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<th>AR</th>
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<th>GPA Posse</th>
<th>GPA Other</th>
<th>N Other</th>
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<td>3.27</td>
<td>2.81</td>
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• Scholars have somewhat higher rates of academic probation (16% vs. 5%) and required-withdrawal semesters (5% vs. 1%) than other students. However, Scholars have graduated at a higher rate (96% vs. 87%).

• 43 Scholars have graduated from Lafayette: 22 in the social sciences, 10 in the natural sciences, 4 in engineering, 4 in the humanities, and 3 in interdisciplinary fields.

EPC has discussed the many benefits of the Posse program, including its contribution to the diversification of the College’s student body, the recruitment of talented students based on non-traditional criteria, and the access the program provides to students who might not otherwise be strongly considered for admission at Lafayette. We have also considered expenses, including the roughly $90,000 spent annually to cover Posse recruitment and programming, course releases for Posse faculty advisors, and the 9% of the annual financial aid budget that supports 4% of the student body. EPC looks forward to continuing its discussion of the Posse program during the fall semester; faculty are encouraged to forward any comments regarding the Posse program to next year’s chair.