

Prioritized Propositions for Improvement at Lincoln University

from

**Vital Focus Process
May—December 2005**

**Prepared for
Cabinet Retreat
May 24-25
by
The Vital Focus Committee**

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History of Vital Focus at Lincoln University

March 2005, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Joe Simmons, Dean Patrick Henry, University Senate Chair Dr. James Borgwald and Institutional Planner Randall Hill presented President Mahoney with the outline of the Vital Focus process. Vital Focus is a process developed by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association whereby a University might, through a series of broad-based series of surveys, conversations, reports, focus groups and analyses, arrive at three or more generally agreed upon proposals for action which would “matter most” to the improvement of the institution in the coming years. From these propositions (outlined in this report) plans of action could be developed to guide the direction of the University through the two to three years ahead. In addition, if the University so chooses, progress toward the goals and objectives developed from these propositions, could be monitored using the Academic Quality Improvement Program of the Higher Learning Commission and lead toward continuous accreditation.

President Mahoney authorized Dr. Simmons to proceed. A Vital Focus Committee was organized, led by Dean Henry, Dr. Borgwald and Mr. Hill. In May of 2005 the on-line Constellation Survey was administered to all University employees, results were processed and returned to the University in time for Conversation Day. Conversation Day, a University-wide series of activities facilitated by a Vital Focus staff person, was conducted at Lincoln University’s Fall Institute, August 17, 2005 and involved all LU employees.

Following an orchestrated series of reports, meetings and focus groups held throughout fall semester and involving faculty, staff and administrators of Lincoln University, the three prioritized propositions and the additional information in this report were distilled. The bulk of the reports produced by this process are posted on the Lincoln University Web Site, Faculty and Staff page under Vital Focus Information.

Executive Summary of Results

The Vital Focus process asks the University to arrive at three to five “Provocative Propositions”. After careful review of the *Conversation Day Summary Report*, *Quick Fixes* and *Conversation Two Prioritized Propositions* the Vital Focus Committee has established the following three issues as most critical to the advancement of Lincoln University:

I. Compensation equity and valuing people

Of seventeen units reporting their three top priorities from Conversation Two, 6 ranked “compensation equity” as top priority, 6 ranked it second priority, 0 ranked it third priority, 5 did not rank this as a top three.

II. Enhancing the academic environment for student success

Of seventeen units reporting three top priorities from Conversation Two, 4 ranked “student and academic environment” as top priority, 3 ranked it as second priority, 3 ranked it third priority, and 7 did not rank this as a top three

III. Improving communication

Of seventeen units reporting three top priorities from Conversation Two, 1 ranked “improving communication” as top priority, 0 ranked it as second priority, 6 ranked it as third priority, and 10 did not rank this as a top three

Ten propositions were ranked in units’ top three which did not fit under the above top three priority groupings:

Customer Service

Of seventeen units reporting three top priorities from Conversation Two, 3 ranked “customer service” as their third priority

Policies and Deadlines

Of seventeen units reporting three top priorities from Conversation Two, 1 ranked “policies and deadlines” as top priority, and 1 ranked it third priority

Grant Incentives

Of seventeen units reporting three top priorities from Conversation Two, 1 ranked “grant incentives” as their third priority
“Grant incentives” was mentioned as a strategy in several propositions listed under “compensation equity”

Datatel Function and Use

Of seventeen units reporting three top priorities from Conversation Two, 2 ranked “Datatel function and use” as their top priority

Enhance Library Services

Of seventeen units reporting three top priorities from Conversation Two, 1 ranked “library services” as their top and third priority

Summaries of the top 3 propositions

A wealth of strategies and actions are suggested in the priorities drafted by the various units. Summarized below is a bulleted-list of the common highlights taken from the verbatim propositions presented in the body of this report.

PRIORITY ONE: COMPENSATION EQUITY AND VALUING PEOPLE

- A compensation schedule or matrix guaranteeing parity and fairness
- Ensure parity with faculty and staff at peer institutions
- Ensure an incremental cost of living allowance
- Provide for regular and predictable increases in compensation
- Increases in compensation for time on the job
- Increases in compensation for additional training or education
- Provide a mechanism for merit increases in compensation
- Establish a grants office
- Reward individuals who secure grants
- Provide special events and/or recognition for special accomplishments
- Ensure newspaper recognition of the University and LU faculty and staff accomplishments
- Initiate an employee recognition program
- Provide educational opportunities for the professional development of faculty and staff
- Offer tuition waivers for graduate coursework

PRIORITY TWO: ENHANCING THE ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT FOR GREATER SUCCESS

- Provide support services to students to ensure retention
- Analyze current processes and practices of student support
- Examine reasons for student withdrawal and non-return
- Provide adequate services for all under-prepared students admitted
- Focus recruitment on serious high school students who are adequately prepared
- Focus recruitment on top feeder schools
- Use scholarships to attract and retain top quality students
- Streamline the enrollment process
- Define and analyze the reasons for bottlenecks in admissions processes
- Adhere to established policies and deadlines
- Increase and support multimedia classrooms
- Establish services to serve the needs of commuter services
- Implement full use of Datatel's Communication Module
- Communicate with prospective students early and often

**PRIORITY THREE:
ENHANCING COMMUNICATION**

- Develop strategies to share internal information on a timely basis
- Formalize a system of cross-unit and asymmetrical conversations to address issues of concern to the LU community
- Reinstate the “Monday Matters” newsletter
- Hire on-campus personnel to provide press releases from departments, student activities, achievements, etc. to local and state media as appropriate
- Hire a lobbyist to the Missouri legislature
- Coordinate marketing and public relations
- Continue the improvement of the LU website
- Require students, staff and faculty to use LU e-mail for official correspondence
- Provide “New Employee Orientation” to every new employee
- Offer a program of peer mentoring
- Publish a Resource Directory for campus contacts and referrals
- Provide customer service training to every employee
- Do a comprehensive analysis of workflow processes
- Institute a systematic program of “Process Improvement Programs”

LINCOLN UNIVERSITY PRIORITY 1

Compensation Equity and Valuing People

Ranking 3 from BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

Management of Compensation: Have a salary schedule that gives increases for time on the job and additional training or education. A person will be able to look into the future and see that they will be compensated for staying at Lincoln University and budgeting will be easier because the wage/benefits are established years in advance with no surprises.

Ranking 2 from EDUCATION

- We propose the continuous identification of sources of income and the development of a salary matrix with written procedures to achieve parity and fairness in salaries and benefits.
- We propose to establish an *Office for Grant Management and Acquisition* to develop University-wide policies for compensation, incentives, and indirect cost sharing as they relate to grants made to Lincoln University. EDUCATION

Ranking 1 from SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORIAL SCIENCES:

Management of Compensation

We propose that Lincoln University engage in continuous identification of sources of income and the development of a salary matrix with written procedures to achieve parity with other comparable institutions and fairness among faculty and staff at Lincoln University in salaries and benefits.

Ranking 2 from HUMANITIES, FINE ARTS & JOURNALISM

Addressing Faculty/Staff Salaries

Ranking 1 from NURSING SCIENCE

Valuing People

Strategies:

- Equitable compensation and recognition
- Change culture to user-people friendly culture. Treat all employees and students with respect and courtesy.
- Value community that we live in.
- Consider merit increases for employees who go the extra mile.
- Special events for special accomplishments of employees i.e. A reception for the nursing department when they received national accreditation.
- Newspaper announcements of LU accomplishments
- Provide social opportunities for commuter students
- Provide educational programs for faculty to enhance teaching

Ranking 2 from BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

Raising Morale and Performance: This can be done by increasing wages to reflect the wages being earned by similar employees throughout the area. There are several jobs listed on the Web Site that are not filled because the wage or benefit package is not attractive enough to persuade someone to work here. If a better worker is attracted the morale and performance will increase because that worker is attracted.

Ranking 1 from CLERICAL STAFF:

Lincoln University should develop, fund and implement an equitable compensation matrix for faculty and staff.

The following issues and/or strategies must be addressed in this plan:

- a. The 3.5% difference between faculty and staff raises at the past increase must be addressed first.
- b. The matrix must be, first and foremost equitable.
- c. The matrix must consider years of service before merit.
- d. The matrix must meet comparable market salaries for similar positions.
- e. The matrix must provide regular and predictable increases in compensation.
- f. The matrix must include every employee, position and year of service.
- g. Tuition waivers for employees should be considered as valued compensation that costs the University little. Eligibility requirements for tuition waivers (length of service, etc.) should be revisited. Graduate waivers should be offered.
- h. Employee classifications on the matrix need review.
- i. Extra duties and compensation beyond regularly assigned duties inside the various classifications need to be brought under scrutiny.

The Clerical Staff recognizes that a Lincoln University Compensation Committee is currently addressing this problem. However, the staff feels strongly that communication from the Compensation Committee is insufficient to keep most employees informed as to what progress is being made or what issues are being considered. The staff strongly recommends that measure be taken to increase and enhance communication.

Ranking 2 from GRADUATE STUDIES AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

Valuing People

We propose that Lincoln University develop adequate processes and direct resources to effectively compensate and recognize employees.

Actions:

- Initiate an employee recognition program
- Develop and implement a fair and complete compensation and benefit plan.

Ranking 1 from HUMAN RESOURCES:

I. Valuing People

- A. Employee Compensation-budget and schedule annual cost of living increases and provide consistent amounts to both staff and faculty.
- B. Instituting a staff compensation system that is based on market value and worth of position through a job analysis and job slotting process.
- C. Incorporate a merit increase system based on performance, achievement and professional development
- D. Equitable allocation of grant funding and state appropriations so that grand funded departments receive the same increases at the same time all other university employees receive.

Ranking 2 from AGRICULTURE, BIOLOGY, CHEMISTRY AND PHYSICS

Raising Morale and Performance through Equitable Compensation and Recognition

We propose that *by the Fall 2006* Lincoln University restructure and implement an employee compensation system which addresses equity-including, but not limited to years of service, performance evaluations, employee classifications, etc. (*We added a deadline date*)

Ranking 1 from MATHEMATICS:

Reallocate funds to provide for competitive salaries and benefits for all employees, to provide competitive salaries for adjuncts, to provide for merit pay, to reward successful grant winners.

Ranking 1 from BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS

Valuing faculty, staff and students

Ranking 2 from ADMISSIONS AND RECORDS

2. Better customer service and more notice for a job well done

LINCOLN UNIVERSITY PRIORITY 2

Enhancing the Academic Environment for Greater Success

Ranking 1 from GRADUATE STUDIES AND CONT. EDUCATION –

Institutional Support

We propose that Lincoln University direct adequate resources to provide support services to students with the goal of increased retention.

Actions:

- Look at current process and practices for providing support.
- Examine and study reasons for withdrawal and non-return.
- Develop specific strategies and actions to improve processes and address reasons why students leave.

Ranking 1 from BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS

Helping students learn

Ranking 2 from SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORIAL SCIENCES

Admissions and Recruitment

We propose that Lincoln University either refocus financial and human resources to a recruitment effort throughout Missouri and surrounding states geared toward the serious high school seniors and adult learners who have college aspirations and are adequately prepared for college;

or

if current admissions and recruitment patterns persist, that comprehensive and systematic institutional improvements be made so that Lincoln University faculty can adequately serve academically under-prepared students. Such improvements are made necessary by the realities and needs of under-prepared students, and might include (but should not be limited to) such things as: realistic assignments and expectations for faculty workloads that provide the necessary additional planning, preparation, and presentation time; creation of effective policies and mechanisms for the monitoring and “problem solving” required to serve such students; continuing education or training to provide faculty with required additional and specialized skills needed to serve under-prepared students, etc.

Ranking 1 from BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

Student retention: The Building and Grounds Department does not know how to accomplish this objective, but the need is clear to increase retention to build strong alumni gifting, to build a loyalty and pride in Lincoln University that will, in the long run, mean more and better students.

Ranking 2 from STUDENT AFFAIRS

Improve retention of students, faculty and staff.

Strategy/Action to achieve it:
Enforce all deadlines.

Provide more scholarships

Develop and implement a process to change the culture so every member of the Lincoln University family understands their role in retention. Institutionalize retention. Tie all efforts together through collaborative efforts to improve retention.

Provide a more conducive work environment (adequate space, necessary equipment, supplies, personnel, etc.) and competitive salaries. Provide meritorious financial reward. Not across the board salary increase except as it relates to the cost of living.

Ranking 3 from STUDENT AFFAIRS

Enhance recruitment.

Strategy/Action to achieve it:
Focus on feeder schools.

Ranking 3 from NURSING SCIENCE

Helping Students Learn

Strategies:

- Instructors need to attend class
- Decrease problems with institutional support
- Increase multimedia classrooms and support for these classrooms
- Institute Technology Department to support LU- add student technology fee to support technology
- Increase social support- Make support services more accessible and increase learning communities
- Pay attention to commuter students
- Increase 8 week session course offerings
- Require a research paper Eng 102.

Ranking 1 from CONTROLLER'S OFFICE

Enhanced Recruitment Strategies

Lincoln University needs to revitalize the recruitment efforts placing a strong emphasis on using Datatel's Communications Management tool. Lincoln University should be moving towards the

implementation of an on-line application process as well as putting the Bulletin on the web available for prospective students to review.

We should be aggressively pursuing college-bound students. A step-by-step process should be developed that includes but is not limited to the following:

- Implement strategic recruitment plan that captures “college-bound” students’ interest while they are making decisions. Remember that other Universities are also competing for the same group of students. As additional recruitment tool, partner with external recruitment entities (such as CollegeBoard.com) to assist the University in managing prospective students.
- Integrate scholarship offers to entice top students in order to secure early acceptance. This requires Financial Aid’s involvement in the recruitment process.
- Distribute applications, financial aid and scholarship information to local high school counselors regularly.
- Attend or send University applications to local Career Fairs.
- Begin communication with prospective student early and aggressively. Follow-up on missing item letters and FA applications using Communications Management Tool (tool currently in place). Again, using Communications Management Tool, entice students’ interest by sending out welcome letters from Deans, President, etc., and show our interest and commitment to them. Communications at this point could include estimated cost of attendance, financial aid applications, and a bulletin indicating degree requirements, etc.
- Send out letters of acceptance at the time the prospects are moved to student. Many students continually have to contact Lincoln University to determine if they have been accepted. The acceptance packet sent to the applicant should include information about their email address assigned to them, financial aid applications or missing item letters, as well as registration and payment information.
- Send out letters regarding missing information with regards final HS transcripts, health forms, etc.
- Accepted students should be notified by Financial Aid regarding the intricacies of applying for student aid. This would include deadlines for application, “don’t forget to ...” phrases, mistakes most frequently made, etc. Financial aid will need to develop a follow up system to notify students who are missing information or have not accepted their student aid. Use Communications Management Tool

Ranking 3 from EDUCATION

Students

- We propose Lincoln University prioritize "Helping Students Learn" among the nine AQIP processes and clearly identify and specify specific actions to help students learn, and monitor their progress through their years at University.
- We propose to make the students' path through Lincoln University smoother by 1) streamlining the enrollment process, 2) defining the learning bottlenecks such as the need for remedial education and critical thinking skills development and the basic expectations of college work, such as buying books and bringing pencil and paper to class for note-taking.

Ranking 2 from COMPUTER SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND MATHEMATICS

2. Improve the academic environment so that all students can be successful.

Ranking 2 from PAGE LIBRARY

B. Using information technology to enhance the curriculum.

LINCOLN UNIVERSITY PRIORITY 3

Enhancing Communication

Ranking 3 from SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORIAL SCIENCES

Improving Marketing and Public Relations.

We propose that Lincoln University create clear processes and commits resources toward improving internal and external communication that promotes the University.

We should hire a lobbyist who can gain and sustain LU support in the Missouri legislature. We should also have an on-campus employee whose duties include researching notable events from departments (e.g., grant awards, community projects) and writing these into press releases for local television, radio, and newspaper coverage. Such coverage will serve as a marketing tool and will simultaneously help to improve the reputation of Lincoln University.

Ranking 3 from EDUCATION

Communication

- We propose the development, implementation, and evaluation of an on-going, comprehensive communications system (on an informal and engaged basis).
- We propose that the Lincoln University community foster channels of communication that encourage asymmetrical conversations where everyone's voice has value and experience themselves as valuable contributors of the organization, thus enhancing trust among members and understanding of the institution.

Ranking 3 from AGRICULTURE, BIOLOGY, CHEMISTRY AND PHYSICS

Improving Marketing and Public Relations

We propose that Lincoln University create clear processes and commit financial and human resources to improve internal and external communication that promotes the University as well as increases internal and external collaboration.

Ranking 3 from HUMAN RESOURCES

Better Customer Service

- A. Resource Directory for campus contacts and referrals, that would outline office functions
- B. Customer Service Training-all employees have access and more money budgeted for training
- C. Continue to make the LU website and WebPages more user friendly
- D. Allow tuition waivers for graduate students

Ranking 3 from CLERICAL STAFF:

Lincoln University needs to embark upon a series of programs designed to enhance communication among University stakeholders at every level.

The following issues and/or strategies must be addressed in this plan:

- a. Reinstate a “Monday Matters” newsletter to keep everyone informed. Consider electronic as well as print formats, or some combination of media.
- b. Offer a comprehensive program of “New Employee Orientation”.
- c. Offer a comprehensive program of “Cross-Training” to enhance workflow processes and increase efficiency.
- d. Do a comprehensive analysis of workflow processes, identify inefficiencies and “hang-ups”, and institute a systematic program of “Process Improvement Programs” to revamp trouble-spots.
- e. Offer a program of peer mentoring for employees.
- f. Provide, on a regular basis, customer service workshops. (See Quick Fixes below)

Ranking 1 from STUDENT AFFAIRS

Improve communication campus wide (students, faculty and staff) and externally to our constituents.

Strategy/Action to achieve it:

Develop and enforce policy that mandates/requires students to use Lincoln University e-mail for official notifications (financial aid award letters, tuition bills, conduct letters, communication with faculty, etc...)

Continue to use the listserv to communicate information to faculty and staff

Ranking 3 from GRADUATE STUDIES AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

Proposition #3 – Leadership and Communicating

We propose that Lincoln University create clear processes and commit financial and human resources to improve internal and external communication that promotes the University as well as increases internal and external collaboration.

Actions:

- Develop strategies to share internal information on a timely basis.
- Develop and implement a marketing plan.

Ranking 3 from ADMISSIONS AND RECORDS

3. Orientation of new faculty and staff

OTHER PRIORITIES

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Ranking 3 from HUMAN RESOURCES

Better Customer Service

- E. Resource Directory for campus contacts and referrals, that would outline office functions
- F. Customer Service Training-all employees have access and more money budgeted for training
- G. Continue to make the LU website and WebPages more user friendly
- H. Allow tuition waivers for graduate students

Ranking 3 from NURSING SCIENCE:

Institution Support

Strategies:

- Financial Aid needs to take phone calls. Unable to find out when Financial Aid will be processed. Sometimes the FA employees are perceived as “nasty” to the students.
- Need good customer service in support areas similar to business expectations.
- Students have to be diligent to get admitted to LU. Students state they have not received follow-up. Students state that they have to submit transcript and various papers for admissions several times. Also, that is “it takes an act of God” to get admitted.
- Consider “Value Added” approach

- Lack of Customer Service and inefficiency in areas of admissions, records and financial aid are endemic and need to be fixed.
- Is there a need for a letter of good standing to be admitted? And if there is this should be part of the admission packet for transfer students. Honors students have not been able to register due to lack of letter of good standing.
- Difficulty getting transcripts. After two months of request, student still do not have transcripts.
- On-line registration and payment would be advantageous.
- Support for on-line courses is needed 24 hours a day.

Ranking 3 from BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS

3. Understanding and responding to student and stockholder needs.

POLICIES AND DEADLINES

Ranking 1 from HUMANITIES, FINE ARTS AND JOURNALISM

1. Adhering to policies and deadlines.

Ranking 2 from HUMAN RESOURCES

III. Student/Stakeholders/People

- A. Consistent Policies and Procedures-enforcement of written policies
- B. Establish a committee to do ground work on LU Rules and Regulations review to determine the need for amendments or revisions
- C. More effective communication-have all departmental staff and their prospective Vice Presidents have quarterly meetings to discuss pertinent issues
- D. Enforce more strict guidelines for participation in remedial education and student support services for students with less than 2.0 GPA i.e. mandatory study time, tutoring etc.

Ranking 3 from COMPUTER SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND MATHEMATICS

3. Renegotiate the agreement between LU and Collegis.

Ranking 1 from ADMISSIONS AND RECORDS

1. Adhere to all deadlines: make deadlines reasonable

GRANT INCENTIVES

Ranking 3 from CONTROLLER'S OFFICE

3. Grant incentive Program

Develop a grant incentive plan to encourage faculty to successfully compete for sponsored grants that contribute to the mission of the University. The incentive plan would provide a mechanism to acknowledge and reward faculty that recover full indirect cost recovery. The successful faculty member would be entitled to a portion of the recovered indirect cost. Grants that qualify for incentive should include the following:

1. The grant or contract must recover 100% of the negotiated indirect cost recovery rate or allowable rate by the granting agency;
2. The grant must also provide a reasonable (allowable) portion of the Principal Investigator's salary that offsets the General Operating fund.

Ranking 1 in HUMAN RESOURCES (see item D.)

I. Valuing People

- A. Employee Compensation-budget and schedule annual cost of living increases and provide consistent amounts to both staff and faculty.
- B. Instituting a staff compensation system that is based on market value and worth of position through a job analysis and job slotting process.
- C. Incorporate a merit increase system based on performance, achievement and professional development
- D. Equitable allocation of grant funding and state appropriations so that grand funded departments receive the same increases at the same time all other university employees receive.

DATATEL FUNCTION AND USE

Ranking 1 from AGRICULTURE, BIOLOGY, CHEMISTRY AND PHYSICS

Improving *Web-Advisor/Datatel Functionality* and Its Relationship to Student Services
We propose a task force be established consisting of members from Records, Admissions and Department Heads, to establish *appropriate workflow and its documentation*.
(*We made slight modifications in the title and proposed wording*)

Ranking 1 from CONTROLLER'S OFFICE

1. Staff and faculty have something in common that is causing a good deal of dissatisfaction and frustration; Datatel. The general opinion is that Datatel isn't a good product. In fact, Datatel is a very good product and is very versatile. However, with the versatility comes complexity. The University would be greatly served by educating faculty and staff about how to use all the functionality of the product. This will allow better decision making in developing the system to meet our needs.

a. The first stumbling block seems to be a lack of consensus in the understanding of OIT's role at Lincoln University. It appears that the University has one understanding and Collegis has another. It's important for a decision to be made as to exactly what that relationship is and get everyone on the same page. Make sure everyone knows who is supposed to do what and create that new working relationship, whatever it might be.

b. Each functional area of the college needs at least two 'power users'. These individuals need to completely understand the modules they use in their area. They need to understand what options are available for setup and what functionality would be gained by it. Then informed decisions can be made considering the system capabilities and the needs of the University. In order to be power users, these individuals will need extensive training from Datatel either at their facilities or on campus.

c. Once the training is complete, the power users should then meet with the various departments as a group to make decisions as to system setup. Finally, they would then train the end-users how to use the system as it is set up.

ENHANCE LIBRARY SERVICES

Ranking 1 from Page Library

A. providing informational and educational services to the students to include working copiers in the library and wireless access in the library.

Ranking 3 from Page Library

C. Inspiring students to academic and personal excellence by having professional librarians teach classes in Bibliographic Instruction and General Education courses such as GE 101, to ensure students learn basic research skills in using library electronic resources.