**Better Lesley Faculty and Staff FAQs**

1. **Why does Lesley need to make these changes?**

Lesley plays a unique and important role in the higher education landscape, conferring the most degrees in New England for specialized education and mental health, and leading in graduating practicing artists. To continue to support these critically needed professions in a highly competitive marketplace, we are evolving.

1. **What changes does Lesley need to make?**

We are refocusing on our core strengths in education, mental health, the arts, and the fields related to those strengths, we are bringing Lesley together, academically and administratively, as one dynamic university. To create a path toward a strong and thriving Lesley—now and for generations to come—we are improving our academic and administrative structures for more flexibility, accessibility and vibrancy in the student experience.

1. **What has the process been for making these changes?**

The need for these changes became apparent in the fall of 2022, when our enrollment did not return after the pandemic to the levels that were expected, as was true for many other colleges and universities. We responded quickly, and by early January 2023, we launched Better Lesley, engaging more than 100 management faculty and staff in determining how to reach our goals by creating the best educational experience and a future where with live within our means.

Over the 2023 spring semester, this group identified many initiatives and approaches, which were presented to the Board of Trustees in June. The Board charged leadership to: 1) re-focus on Lesley’s core strengths, invest in its growth, and move away from low-enrolled programs; 2) operate as one university, academically and administratively; and 3) continue the work of the Strategic Framework and the Campus Plan.

1. **What changes are we making?**

Administrative Work Groups on enrollment, advising, registration, and the employee experience are developing uniform systems and procedures across the university, including:

* focusing on 15 well-coordinated enrollment intakes instead of 45,
* centralizing registration and scheduling,
* moving to one coordinated advising model, and
* implementing grounding orientation and periodic Foundation sessions to ensure all employees are aware of, and use, university resources.

We are investing in key programs, deepening partnerships, building an effective online program strategy, and extending lifelong support to our graduates, starting with Threshold.

Crucial to all this is the formation of an Academic Work Group (comprised of the president, interim Provost, the three Associate Deans and Heads of their academic areas and the Dean of the liberal arts school) with the charge of simplifying our academic structure for clearer, easier to navigate and more accessible offerings. Some examples of this complexity include:

* 77 degrees, frequently without the sharing of common courses,
* 2,242 courses posted for 2,200 FTE students, and
* More than 25% of posted courses did not run this fall.

1. **Are academic programs being restructured?**

Yes, the Academic Work Group engaged the management faculty to determine the best way to structure academic programs going forward. Together, they are working to have a preliminary strategic plan in early October and a finalized plan by mid-Fall, which will allow us to post a much more accurate and student-responsive schedule.

The centerpiece of this planis investing in Lesley’s key programs and identifying and restructuring low-enrolled and non-core programs. In most cases, this will result in programmatic areas being combined to create more inter-disciplinary approaches to learning. In four programs, where, for instance, there are three faculty positions for 15 students, the decision will mean that students currently enrolled in those programs will graduate with those degrees, but these programs will no longer be offered as majors in the future. To be clear, ALL students currently enrolled will be able to finish their programs and advisors and support staff are reaching out to any affected student to assure their continued advancement in their chosen program.

1. **Will faculty be affected?**

These difficult decisions will unfortunately mean the loss of some valued faculty colleagues, and our focus now is on caring for these individuals. We will be reaching out directly to meet individually with affected employees, and we will engage in effects bargaining with the core faculty union. Fortunately, we have been able to lessen the impact by offering other work to affected faculty within the university and through the preservation of some low-enrolled programs that have growth opportunity. Each academic and administrative department will be either meeting and/or holding open office hours to address questions and concerns.

1. **Will administrative and academic staff be affected?**

Right now, we are focusing on the faculty side of operations. As we continue to develop uniform systems and procedures across the university, some administrative and academic staff may be affected but we will also continue to add staff as needed. We will always look to retain talented and hardworking staff as roles change by giving them the opportunity to grow in new areas if they have the skills or can develop them.

1. **I have questions about these changes; who should I speak to?**

Again, each academic and administrative department will be either meeting and/or holding open office hours to address questions and concerns. You can also reach out directly to your Administrative or Academic Cabinet leader.

1. **Are counseling services available?**

The Lesley Employee Assistance Program can be reached at 800-344-9752.

1. **Is Lesley vulnerable to shutting down?**

No. Lesley is fortunate to have a healthy endowment, and excess and valuable real estate that helps us to make this transformation, including investments in our campus plan. Putting in place the changes necessary to make our programs as effective as possible for today’s students will permit Lesley to continue to play a key role in educating teachers, mental health professionals, artists and the related professions that make Lesley—Lesley.