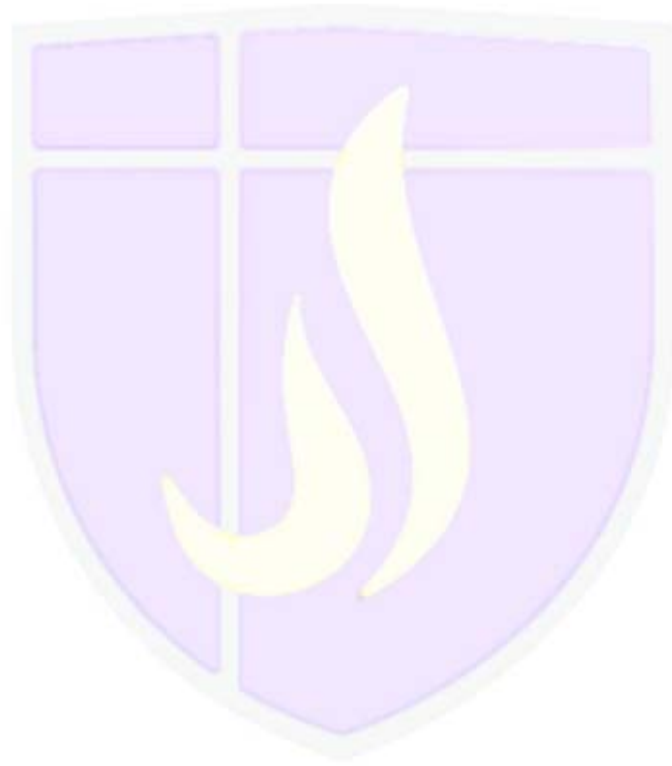


**MAKING A COLLEGE EDUCATION MORE AFFORDABLE
THROUGH INNOVATION AND COLLABORATION**

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Abstract

Lipscomb University has been faced with the challenge of remaining competitive in the higher education market without compromising quality during a national recession. Innovative and collaborative programs are being implemented following the advice of Tennessee State Senator Lamar Alexander to make college education more affordable.

A new Community College Initiative, a Three-Year Education Plan, and a Veteran Scholars Initiative are three innovative programs that have been recently implemented. These programs, with the collaboration of deans and faculty with government agencies and community colleges, will provide a quality higher education that is affordable to consumers.

INTRODUCTION OF THE ORGANIZATION

Lipscomb University was established in 1891 by David Lipscomb and James A. Harding. Growing from their own educational experiences, both men believed that a regular study of the Bible was foundational to any course of study. Since that time, the university -- first as the Nashville Bible School, then David Lipscomb College, now Lipscomb University -- has taught Bible classes daily for all full-time students.

Their founding concept continues to be reflected in the university mission today: to integrate Christian faith and practice with academic excellence. This mission is carried out not only in the classroom but also by involvement in numerous services to the church, and community, and across the world. Lipscomb served as a junior college until graduating its first senior college class in 1948. The institution received its first accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools in 1954. In 1988, that organization's Commission on Colleges advanced Lipscomb's accreditation to the master's degree level. In 2006, Lipscomb University announced it would establish the first College of Pharmacy in Middle Tennessee. This would become the university's first doctoral level program. Today, 3,418 students are enrolled at the university, which is an increase of 12% over the prior fiscal year. The university is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to award bachelor's and master's degrees.

Statement of the Problem/Initiative

Higher Education institutions wrestle with ways to make a college education more affordable without compromising their quality. If the only strategy of higher education institutions is to cut costs, eventually quality will suffer and prospective students would be more likely to look elsewhere for their college experience. Given this competitive market environment in higher education, coupled with a national recession that has increased unemployment, how can a college maintain momentum while planning for the recovery of the economy? Higher education institutions can either reflect through their operations the negative financial impact of the world around them, or they can positively lead themselves and their constituents through best practices and innovation that helps students and their families afford an education without compromising quality.

Design

Lipscomb University's approach to offering affordable higher education was to implement a strategy of innovation. This innovation involved collaboration with government programs, collaboration with community colleges, and collaboration with deans and faculty to deliver products and services demanded in the marketplaces that are affordable to consumers.

On April 13, 2009, Lipscomb University announced that it was taking the advice of Tennessee State Senator Lamar Alexander by making a college education more affordable. President Lowry of Lipscomb University unveiled three new initiatives for Lipscomb to be a leader in this cause:

- **The Community College Initiative** - Establishes a full-tuition Trustee's Scholarship for one student from each of the Tennessee Board of Regents community colleges and a new \$2,500 scholarship for eligible community college students who transfer with a minimum of 30 credit hours. In addition, Lipscomb has established a streamlined process for accepting community college credits.
- **The Three-Year Education Plan** - Adds the option of earning a bachelor's degree in three years. The three-year plan requires classes during two summers resulting in a \$10,000 savings and the opportunity to enter the workforce or pursue a Master's degree a year early.
- **Veteran Scholars Initiative** - Lipscomb intends to match dollar-for-dollar the federal government aid provided through the Yellow Ribbon G.I. program, allowing eligible military veterans and their family members to earn an undergraduate Lipscomb degree tuition-free. In addition, Lipscomb will designate veteran liaisons in its student services, counseling and career centers.

The Community College Initiative

Lipscomb University is deliberate in its improved service and pricing efforts to reach community college students. Lipscomb hired an Admissions Recruiter, Aaron Burtch, to focus exclusively on improving communication and access between community colleges and Lipscomb University. Lipscomb wanted to back up its improved relationships with community colleges with strategically enhanced financial aid offerings. For example, Lipscomb established a full-tuition Trustee's Scholarship for one student from each of the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) community colleges. These thirteen community colleges comprise all two-year public institutions in Tennessee. Lipscomb also established a new \$2,500 scholarship for eligible community college students who transfer with a minimum of 30 credit hours, regardless of grade point average (GPA). Also, community college honor students in Phi Theta Kappa receive an additional \$2,000 scholarship if they have a 3.5 or better GPA.

In addition to scholarships, Lipscomb has also established a streamlined process for accepting community college credits. For example, articulation agreements have been setup with local community colleges where Lipscomb will accept all TBR community colleges credits as long as they are not remedial. TBR community college students with a transcript and Associates Degree or equivalent thereof (which indicates successful completion of 60 hours or more) will enjoy easy transition from their community college to Lipscomb University. Previously, the process could take up to a couple of weeks to process a transfer student and assign them to an appropriate advisor. Now with new articulation agreements in place with community colleges, and with the office of Admissions services as the central point of contact for transfer students, the time it takes

to turn a qualified transcript applicant into an admitted student with an advisor is a matter of two to three days.

The Three-Year Education Plan

Tennessee Senator Lamar Alexander, at a conference hosted by the American Council on Education in Washington, D.C. in February 2009, suggested colleges should offer three-year degrees, cutting down the cost of getting a college education. Lipscomb University not only heard this charge from its Senator, but decided to do something about it. Lipscomb University is now launching a program to help students obtain undergraduate degrees in three years. The Three-Year Education Plan at Lipscomb University requires classes during two summers and results in over \$10,000 savings for participating students.

Lipscomb University students who choose to graduate on the three-year fast track have a significant financial advantage, more time to pursue other academic interests, and are able to start their career early. More than 50 of Lipscomb's major programs of study can be completed in three years---all with dedicated, interested faculty who engage students in challenging, scholarly and faith-informed studies. Students participating in the Three-Year Degree Plan who meet the program's criteria qualify to receive a \$1,000 voucher that may be applied to tuition, room and board, or one of Lipscomb's study abroad travel courses.

Lipscomb University students should consider the following factors as they consider pursuing the Three-Year Degree Plan:

* ACT/SAT score

- * High school grade point average and rank
- * Outside employment commitments
- * Recommended college credits to take within a semester
- * Academic commitment and motivation of the individual student

According to Tennessee Senator Lamar Alexander, “A three-year college degree is not for every student, just as a hybrid car is not for every driver. But for some well-prepared students, earning a degree in three years can save both time and money.”

Veteran Scholars Initiative

Lipscomb University is proudly participating at the highest level in the federal government’s new Yellow Ribbon Program. Eligible military veterans and/or their families qualify for free tuition toward an undergraduate degree and significant discounts toward a graduate degree. If military service men and women qualify for 100 percent of the Post-9/11 GI Bill, Lipscomb University will match dollar-for-dollar the federal government aid provided through the Yellow Ribbon Program.

A variety of services have been specially designed for veterans on campus. David Hughes, a retired Captain who served with United States Army Special Forces in Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, is Lipscomb University’s Veterans Liaison. Hughes works as an advocate for all veterans who enroll at Lipscomb University. The Veterans Liaison Office helps students transition from military life to university life, and a veterans student group gives students the opportunity to meet fellow

veterans on campus.

Lipscomb is proud to recognize veterans for their selfless service in operations Iraqi Freedom or Enduring Freedom by offering these innovative programs with the collaboration of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Implementation

Lipscomb University unveiled these new initiatives for traditional and non-traditional students on April 13, 2009. An Admissions Recruiter was hired to focus on communication between community colleges and Lipscomb University. The full-tuition Trustee's Scholarship was established to benefit one student from each Tennessee Board of Regents community colleges. Also, the \$2,500 scholarship for eligible students who transfer with a minimum of 30 credit hours was established. The additional \$2,000 scholarship for students with a 3.5 or higher GPA was also created. Articulation agreements were set up with local community colleges to accept all TBR community college credits other than remedial.

Lipscomb University launched the three-year program to help students obtain an undergraduate degree in three years in response to Tennessee Senator Lamar Alexander's suggestion to offer a three-year degree. The \$1,000 voucher given to qualifying students who met the program's criteria was also created. This may be applied to tuition, room and board, or one of Lipscomb's travel abroad courses.

In collaboration with the Department of Veterans Affairs' Yellow Ribbon Program, the Veteran Scholars Initiative was established. A veterans liaison was hired to work as an advocate for veterans who enroll at Lipscomb. The discounts for qualifying military veterans and/or their families were established. The Veterans Liaison Office was also set up to help students transition from military life to university life.

Benefits

Lipscomb has been very intentional about engaging with the community and offering innovative programs in collaboration with government agencies and community colleges. The streamlined process for recruiting transfer students and improved financial aid offerings has resulted in a 19% increase in overall transfers and a 52% increase in community college transfers in the fall of 2009 versus the fall of 2008. Military veterans have more than doubled in response to Lipscomb's full participation in the Yellow Ribbon Program. Despite the difficult national economic environment, Lipscomb University has used innovation and collaboration to proactively meet its challenges in a way that has proven successful.