

Lake Forest College Values-Based Decision-Making Guide Draft

At Lake Forest College, all of our significant decisions should be intentional and justified; we wish to avoid arbitrary decision-making (or the appearance thereof). In that spirit, every decision should:

- Account for the people of our community (faculty, staff, students, and friends of the College [Board of Trustees, Alumni, institutional partners, donors, parents and family, and the local community])
- Safeguard the longevity of the institution
- Uphold the mission of the College

To accomplish this goal, we suggest the following step-by-step process for values-based decision making. While it will take time to complete this process, we believe it will result in both better decision-making and greater community understanding of and faith in decisions that are made. While some decisions may need to be made quickly, on an urgent basis, this process could still be consulted and/or used to assess the decision in retrospect.

1. Fully articulate the issue being addressed. Does this issue concern an existing situation?
 - a. **If so:**
 - i. Specify the issue. Is it:
 1. A failing system or policy?
 2. An outdated policy?
 3. A safety concern?
 4. An issue of inequity (historical or current)?
 - ii. What data shows that this is a significant issue?
 - iii. Which governance body, committee, or department oversees this issue?
 - iv. Is there a reasonable (and accessible) compromise to address the issue?
 - b. **If not:**
 - i. What are the opportunity costs/benefits of raising the issue?
2. Identify options to address the issue and evaluate each option based on our values. For each option being considered, ask the following questions:
 - a. Does it benefit the College, reputationally or financially, in the long term? How so? Based on what evidence? If not, why is it still a worthwhile option?
 - b. Is it consistent with the College's mission? Complete the mission statement checklist.
 - c. Does it significantly increase or decrease faculty and/or staff workload?
 - d. Has it been communicated clearly and persuasively *from the beginning of the process*?
 - e. What data/evidence supports this option? Have you considered and evaluated qualitative and quantitative data that might impact your decision-making process?
 - f. Have stakeholders been identified and given the opportunity to weigh in? If not, why?
 - g. What are the consequences of each option being considered?
 - i. What are the budget implications of this decision (both short and long-term)? Have the budget manager/Business Office/other relevant offices been consulted?
 - ii. Who will be positively impacted by this decision? Who will be negatively impacted by this decision? Why? What data supports this assessment?

- iii. What are the burdens of this decision, and who will likely bear them? What are the benefits of this decision, and who will likely enjoy them? Are these inequities acceptable? Why?
 - iv. What are the risks posed by this option? What is the “worst-case scenario” if the option fails?
 - v. To what extent should economic considerations be the leading factor in this decision?
 1. Is this a case in which near-term monetary considerations should not be our first priority? If not, is this sustainable?
 2. To what extent will investing in this decision pay dividends down the road and/or fulfill other values?
 3. Is this a case in which we should allocate resources to an area/position even if, by some measures, the money could be “better used” elsewhere?
 4. Is this values-based decision marketable for fundraising opportunities?
3. As you prepare to make your decision or choose the best option, be ready to answer the following:
- a. Who has been included in the discussion so far? Who has been omitted?
 - b. Is there a workable compromise that could consolidate some of the options?
 - c. Does the data/evidence support one option over the other(s), and if so, does the outcome conflict with values that we are not willing to compromise?
 - d. Which decision best honors both our values and the data?
 - e. Could some options be deferred rather than rejected?
 - f. Has a champion or leader of your chosen option been identified and notified?
4. Determine how the decision will be communicated to the College community.
- a. Is the decision public or confidential? Why?
 - b. Will the decision-making process be archived? Why and how?
 - c. How should the people most impacted by this decision be notified of the decision?
 - d. How can any tensions or conflicts between areas/departments/programs related to this decision be minimized? Again, might some options be deferred rather than rejected?
5. What are the appropriate next steps in the decision-making process?
- a. Is there to be an appeal process? If so, who will handle it? What are the governance processes/guidelines?
 - b. What data will you collect to assess the decision?
 - c. Most decisions will need to be reviewed regularly, for purposes of maintenance, sunseting, or reporting of impact. Establish the schedule for this, and determine who should participate in the review.