



PE Large Lecture Theatres – Fall 2013

Faculty Data Executive Summary

May 15, 2014

In the Fall 2013 term, the Learning Environment Evaluation Project (LEE) investigated Large Lecture Theatres at the University of Lethbridge campus. This investigation was part of a larger research study that LEE conducted to investigate the effectiveness of a variety of campus teaching and learning spaces, and the first of a two-part study of large lecture theatres. This part of the research project was intended to inform the planning process of the Destination Project New Academic Building.

The purpose of this report was to outline faculty perceptions of and experiences in the two largest lecture theatres on campus, PE250 (capacity: 299 students) and PE275 (capacity: 185 students). The faculty interviews (including a brief oral survey) were one of four aspects of this study and were conducted throughout the Fall 2013 term in conjunction with a) a student survey, b) classroom observations, and c) student open-ended online questions. Five faculty members participated in the study.

The interview questions pertained to the effectiveness of PE250 and PE275 as teaching and learning spaces and included the overall perceived effectiveness, physical aspects, and technological aspects of the rooms.

Overall, instructors liked PE250 as a teaching space. When it was disliked, it was mainly due to the fact that instructors were not fond of teaching a 300-student class. Most instructors reported that the technology in the room was easy to use. Instructors found it difficult to achieve student engagement, but conceded that this may have been a function of class size. On the other hand, they found that the room overall facilitated sightlines to and interaction with students, with the caveat of not being able to hear students well. When asked what could be improved in the room, instructors would like to improve the lighting control and quality in PE250.

Opinions about PE275 were divided. Instructors either loved or hated the room. Lighting control and room layout were two points of consensus when citing negative aspects of the room. Further, it was cumbersome and bordering on impossible to simultaneously use the whiteboard and the projection screen. Sightlines to the back rows were obscured. The location of the only entrance was a further point of complaint. Most instructors agreed that many of the negative features they experienced in both rooms might be primarily due to having to teach a large class.

Based on these data, recommendations for future lecture theatres are (a) a carefully constructed layout that facilitates sightlines and interactions, (b) high ceilings, and (c) lecture theatres of limited size due to instructors preferring to teach smaller classes.