# Learning Communities Today

## Learning better together across campuses

**February 14, 2013**

**University of North Carolina at Greensboro**
**&**
**Western Carolina University**

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**In partnership with the 2013 Lilly Conference at Greensboro**

# *Learning Communities Today*

*February 14, 2013*

*A one-day conference in conjunction with the Lilly Conference at UNCG*

**Hosted by:**
University of North Carolina at Greensboro & Western Carolina University

**Location: JOSEPH S. KOURY CONVENTION CENTER, GREENSBORO, NC**

***Note:*** *Breakfast and lunch are included with your registration fee*

## AGENDA

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| 8:00-8:50 am | **Breakfast served as we 'meet & greet'** |
| 9:00-9:30 am | **Welcome & Introductions** (of all attendees) |
| 9:30-10:40 am | **What's Your GPS?**<br>A look at current practice of institutions represented.<br>(Types of LC models in play? An example of best success? What is the biggest barrier? What question do you most want answered today?) |
| 10:40-10:50 am | ***Break*** |
| 10:50 -11:50 am | ***Consorting with Mapmakers*** [Emily Lardner]<br>A look at the national LC landscape and how it may impact our work. |
| 11:50-12:00 pm | ***Break*** |
| 12:00-1:00 pm | ***The Family Table: Lunch served and conversation***<br>(Seated with an intentional mix of different institutions, roles, LC types, etc.) |
| 1:10-2:20 pm | ***Gated Communities***<br>How do we unlock doors and build alliances to build sustainable structures?<br>(A facilitated conversation emerging from topics submitted from registration or over lunch) [Marin Burton and Robert Crow] |
| 2:20-2:30 pm | ***Break*** |
| 2:30-3:40 pm | ***Extended Family***<br>Creating a community vision for regional LCs. (Are we ready to create an organizational structure and to foster communication and networking?) |
| 3:40-4:00 pm | ***Let's stay in touch!*** Closing remarks, questions, suggestions, etc. |

# The Washington Center at Evergreen State College

http://www.evergreen.edu/washingtoncenter/index.html

The Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education is for the academic success of all students.

As the National Resource Center for Learning Communities, we believe that learning communities—done well—create a collaborative environment where students thrive, faculty and staff do their best work, and learning fosters the habits of mind and skills to tackle complex real-world issues.

In our work with two- and four-year institutions in Washington state and throughout the country, we serve as a conduit between our home institution, The Evergreen State College, and the wider community where the exchange of knowledge serves a common purpose: to provide a quality education for all.

## About the Center

### Guiding Purpose

We are for the academic success of all students. Ultimately, the measures of our success are improvements in students' persistence, achievement, and graduation rates—particularly students who are the first in their families to go to college and those who have been historically under-represented in higher education. We believe that learning communities done well help dedicated faculty, staff, and administrators create powerful learning environments where all students can succeed.

### Our Work

The Washington Center, a public service center of The Evergreen State College, is a statewide resource for two- and four-year higher education institutions with a national reach and a sustained record of educational reform.

### Our work is focused on:

- Helping campus teams design and implement sustainable, high-quality learning community programs that engage and support all learners
- Working with faculty at local, state, regional, and national institutes to design and assess integrative and interdisciplinary learning experiences for students
- Organizing national action-research projects aimed at building the field's collective knowledge and skills on the foundational practices of learning communities done well
- Designing intensive curriculum planning retreats and consultations aimed at strengthening classroom and institutional practices
- Helping campuses find qualified consultants to support their work
- Providing professional development, technical assistance, and developmental evaluation for national reform projects
- Expanding connections between campuses and communities through projects like *Curriculum for the Bioregion*

As the National Resource Center for Learning Communities, the Washington Center organizes the National Summer Institute on Learning Communities, assists with the development of regional learning community networks, offers an online integrative learning library, hosts the learning communities directory and the LEARNCOM listserve, and publishes Learning Community Research and Practice, a biannual, peer-reviewed electronic journal.

## Emily Lardner and Gillies Malnarich, Washington Center Co-Directors

As co-directors of the Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education, we have developed and led the center's work within Washington State and nationally for more than a decade. Three co-authored articles highlight a shift in learning community practice that has occurred during our stewardship: "When Faculty Assess Integrative Learning" (September/October 2009) and "A New Era for Learning Community Work" (July/August 2008) in *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, and "Sustaining Learning Communities: Moving from Curricular to Educational Reform" in *Perspectives*, Winter 2007. We also guest edited and wrote the lead article in a special issue of the *Journal on Learning Communities Research* which highlights findings from Washington Center's two-year national project on Assessing Learning in Learning Communities.

### Emily Lardner, Co-Director

My other writing has been split between composition studies and promoting educational equity through learning communities. I co-edited a book, *Situated Stories: Valuing Diversity in Composition Research*, to help expand the questions being asked in that field as well as the methods used to answer them. I co-authored articles on collaborative teaching and portfolio-based assessment. I also co-authored a chapter and then a monograph on strategies for using learning communities to support the learning of all students, particularly students of color.

My interests lie in connecting research on creating engaging learning environments for students, particularly first generation students, with engaging and sustainable professional development for full and part-time faculty. We need to create better opportunities for students to experience deep and lasting learning with a particular focus on making better use of our time with students in class. I am also deeply interested in assessment at the course and program level.

Before coming to Washington Center, I worked in the English Composition Board at the University of Michigan as a lecturer and then as associate director for writing assessment. Our biggest project was designing a portfolio to assess the writing of incoming students, which we did in collaboration with high school and community college teachers across the state. Since coming to Evergreen, I have been teaching writing in the Evening Weekend Studies program, teaming with faculty across the curriculum. I also taught developmental reading at South Puget Sound Community College as an adjunct.

### Gillies Malnarich, Co-Director

Most recently, my own writing has emphasized learning communities as an intentional, data-based intervention strategy for student success. In The Pedagogy of Possibilities: Developmental Education, College-level Studies and Learning Communities, I argue that learning communities need to be located at critical curricular transition points and/or where students flounder academically. In this publication, and in previous work, I use research on learning and teaching to argue that all students thrive in classrooms where learning college readiness strategies and skills are embedded in intellectually rigorous, real-world, integrative curriculum.

My current and longstanding interests are related to the democratization of higher education, specifically the changes we need to make—at both a structural level and within our classrooms—to ensure that all students receive an education of quality. This aim informs my work as a consultant, coach, developmental evaluator, and designer and facilitator of professional development programs for campus and statewide initiatives.

Before coming to the Washington Center, I worked with educators and campuses in Canada on policy and system-wide practices related to professional development for faculty and staff, institutional effectiveness, and abilities-based assessment from the classroom to the program level. Educated in the humanities and social sciences, I have taught adult literacy, developmental education, and sociology throughout my professional career in multiple settings—at community- and work-based popular education programs, universities, and a large urban community college. Since coming to Evergreen, I have been teaching in Evening and Weekend Studies on my own or with colleagues from various fields and disciplines.

## University of North Carolina at Greensboro

UNCG's Learning Community program is ever evolving and growing. With a long-standing commitment to learning communities through our well-established Residential College program (Warren Ashby RC is the oldest in the state); UNCG is dedicated to expanding the RC program through the further development of learning communities and living-learning communities. In the past three years, UNCG has hired an inaugural director, established an office of learning communities, fostered faculty development around integrated learning, and established first year learning communities with integrated learning for over 50% of our first year student population for fall 2013.

Our LC program is focused on integrated learning between two courses through either a Freshmen Interest Group model or linked courses. Currently we have voluntary enrollment, with this fall having 34% (850) of our first year cohort enrolled in an LC. Additionally, the Office of Learning Communities coordinates and supports the Faculty in Residence Program (FIR) and *The New York Times in the First Year/The New York Times in Leadership*. The FIR program was established in fall 2012 with two faculty members living in the Quad area of campus, and will expand to four faculty members living across campus in fall 2013. The FIRs participate in and facilitate academic based programmatic opportunities for residents of the Residence Halls and learning communities, thus fostering intentional out of the classroom interactions among students and faculty. The FIR serves as an academic role model, support and mentor for students living in their assigned Residence Halls and participates in learning community programs, thereby creating an environment that supports intellectual inquiry and lifelong learning both in and out of the classroom environment.

### Laura Pipe, Director of Learning Communities

*Conference Co-chair*

Arriving in March 2011, Laura Pipe has served as the inaugural Director of Learning Communities at UNCG. Building upon the long tradition of Residential Colleges at UNCG, Laura is facilitating the development of integrated learning-based learning communities for the University and the development of a Faculty in Residence program.

Laura's experience with integrated learning and learning communities began as a student at the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics in Durham, NC. Throughout her career Laura has focused on innovative and collaborative teaching practices at several institution, including the use of *The New York Times* in the classroom. Her teaching philosophies are grounded in interdisciplinary and application-based learning, with a specific focus on preparing students for lifelong learning.

Laura completed her undergraduate work at The Schieffer School of Journalism at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, Texas, and is a proud graduate of the School of Education at Syracuse University in Syracuse, NY. She is currently pursuing her doctorate degree at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro in SocioHistorical Kinesiology.

## Western Carolina University

In 2011, a Task Group of faculty and staff at WCU Task Group documented an exhaustive review of the institutional history with learning communities in a published report. The group generated plans to address identified barriers and to foster the implementation and sustainability of future learning communities. Learning communities align with the goals of WCU's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), *Synthesis: A Pathway to Intentional Learning***,** and the new strategic plan, *Vision 2020: Focusing our Future*. Strategic direction number two, *Enrich the Total Student Experience*, specifies in (Initiative 2.2.3) the institutional commitment to "Increase the number of academic and living-learning communities that integrate active, collaborative, and interdisciplinary learning experiences with curricular goals, ensuring necessary logistical and administrative support. "

WCU offers a variety of first-year learning community models. Following are our current offerings.

- Curricular LCs: These link 2 or more courses around either a theme or disciplinary perspective.
- Curricular-LLC: A discipline-based LC that includes 2 or more courses and residential support.
- First-year LLCs: Themed residential communities with one course.
- Coordinated Studies LC: The Academic Success Program

### Glenda Hensley, Director of First Year Experience

*Conference Co-chair*

Glenda Hensley has been with WCU since 2004 - as a faculty member for 6 years, before moving to administration in 2010. Her educational philosophy and pedagogy are grounded in holistic and integrated approaches to connect academic, co-curricular, social, and developmental experiences and to provide an inclusive and diverse environment for learning and teaching. Her educational and professional background are in Arts Education (Prescott College in Arizona) and in Theatre Costume Design (UNC Greensboro). Her research focus is in how to use interdisciplinary and arts-based methodologies to enhance the educational outcome and experience for students.

As FYE director at WCU, Hensley maintains administrative oversight for all FYE transition courses, first-year seminars, and first-year learning communities. She facilitates/coordinates interdisciplinary and collaborative programs and professional development opportunities connected to first-year student success initiatives. She is the recipient of the Chancellor's Meritorious Service to Students Award; the Chancellor's Engaged Teaching Award, and was a finalist for the Excellence in Teaching Liberal Studies Award. Since coming to WCU, Hensley has earned two competitive fellowships, is the author of nine grants to fund program development and student/faculty research, has presented at over 17 professional conferences, and was invited to publish her FYE course with Dee Fink's "Exemplary Courses" on-line.

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*Learning Communities have been the hallmark of collaboration on many campuses for the last century, but often times Learning Community faculty and practitioners rarely have an opportunity to share their challenges and best practices with other practitioners across campuses. This is where UNCG and WCU joined together: two campuses miles apart working on a common goal - Learning Communities. The 2013 Lilly Conference on College and University Teaching at Greensboro offers our unique partnership an opportunity to come together and "**learn better together!**"*

## Our Guests

**Washington Center**

**Emily Lardner** **Co-director of the Washington Center**

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**The New York Times**

**Greg Mitchell** **Education Manager**

Greg will give a small presentation at the conclusion of the Learning Communities Today Mini-Conference. Greg will be discussing the New York Times and the college readership program. The New York Times provides supplemental co-curricular activities to the institution participants in the readership program. As part of the program, The New York Times also brings speakers to campus.

## A Special Thank You!!!

Without the tireless efforts and creative energy of these folks, we would have a very different learning experience today – so please join Laura and Glenda in saying thanks if the opportunity arises.

**UNCG**

- Lynn Wyrick, Program Coordinator in the Office of the Associate Dean, Undergraduate Studies
- April Taylor, Budget Coordinator for the Office of Learning Communities
- Leigh Smith, Graduate Assistant for the Office of Learning Communities
- Lindsey Payne, Graduate Assistant for the Office of Learning Communities

**WCU**

- Ricky Lanning, Administrative Associate for the Office of Undergraduate Studies
- Annette Parris, Administrative Assistant for the Coulter Faculty Commons
- Jannidy Gonzalez, Office Assistant for the First Year Experience
- Gabby Robinson, Office Assistant for the First Year Experience

## University of Connecticut

**Melissa Foreman Assistant Director for the Learning Community Program**

We have 27 Learning Communities: 17 residential (LLC), 10 non-residential (LC). They are coordinated through the Office of First Year Programs & Learning Communities (which is outside of Student Affairs at UConn) and we collaborate with Residential Life.
LLCs range in size from 25-150; they include primarily freshman, some sophomores, and some have juniors serving in leadership positions. LLCs are major or interest based (ex: Nursing - major-based; EcoHouse - interest-based). Each LC has a team made up of (it varies by community): Faculty (or key staff) Director, Instructor(s), Program Coordinator, Partners, Graduate Assistant(s), Student Mentor(s), Hall Director, Assistant Hall Director, RA(s). Some communities have a required service component for credit. www.LC.uconn.edu

## Shawnee State University, Portsmouth OH

**Jonathan James Residence Coordinator for LLCs**

"The utilization of learning communities at SSU is at best in the pre-developmental/developmental stages. From a housing prespective, we have four different LLCs, but these lack structure and faculty buy-in. I was hired by my institution to begin developing not only LLCs, but LCs for all students.
A majority of my upcoming efforts will be focusing on the creation of a FYE program, which I am hopeful that we will be able to focus on the development of LCs with every LC having a specifc FYE course in common.

## Agnes Scott, Decatur, GA

1. **Suzanne Onorato Associate Dean of Students**
2. **Anna Hobby Director of Residential Life**

Currently our entire first year class is sectioned into LLC, students choose a First Year Seminar (topical 4 credit course) and live on the same floor. In addition we have one first year LLC for students interested in Math and Science. This program is more intentional in that students choose to enroll, take the same FYS (either science or math based) as well as either Chemistry or Biology together.

## Savannah Technical College, Savannah GA

1. **Melanie Smith Academic Advisor**

Savannah Technical College received a PBI Grant which included a Learning Communities component. Students involved in our program have an interest in sustainable career pathways.

2. **Matthew White Department Head, Automotive Technology**

Savannah Technical College received a PBI Grant that included Learning Communities centered around sustainable curriculum. This semester is our first for implementation.

## University of South Carolina

1. **Lauren Humphrey Residence Hall Director**
2. **Stephanie Wolf Residence Life Coordinator**
3. **Christopher Lewandowski Residence Life Coordinator**

Our campus has worked to develop all of our on-campus housing into living and learning communities. My building in particular has four associated communities, the Healthy Carolina Wellness Community, The Moore Experience: Business Community, Psychology and Service Learning Community, and Common Course Experience Community. Each of these takes on a distinct personality and learning style which adds character to the living experience of our students.

4. **Kesha Entzminger Program Manager**

I am affiliated with the Major and Career Exploration learning community.

## Elon University, North Carolina

1. **Evan Small Program Coordinator**
   Elon has 18 living-learning communities. With a Faculty Scholars program to enhance the connections between the classroom and out of classroom experience, each themed LLC has different learning/experience outcomes identified.

2. **Laura Arroyo Associate Director of Residence Life for Residential Education**
   The LLC program at Elon University is quite developed already. We have a little less then 20 LLCs w hich have an LLC advisor for each who also is a professor. We also have a number of faculty in resid enc, but we are moving towards a teacher scholar model for the upcoming year. We are also focusing on creating a residential campus and expanding our LLC program to all require linked courses to clas srooms within the residence halls whenever possible. Our newest community coming on line in 2014 will be called the Global Neighborhood and the focus will be on education with a global and internati onal focus.

## Guilford Technical College, Greensboro, NC

1. **Noel Allen LC Coordinator/Associate Professor**
   Currently we have 3 - 4 LC offered per semester. They are taught by the same instructors every semester - very dedicated. There is no release time, no incentive, other than the satisfaction they get from working closely with one another. We have 2 DevEd LC's and 1 - 2 Curriculum LC's offered.

2. **Jim Simpson, Developmental English Instructor**
   For the spring semester, GTCC has one curriculum-level learning community English 131 and sociology 210. However, within the Developmental English and Reading department, we have two learning communities, one at the English and Reading 080 level and one at the 090 level.

## North Carolina A&T

1. **Juanda Johnson-Taylor Program Manager**
   Students who live in a specially-themed residence hall (or an intentionally clustered portion of the hall), and will participate in academically and intellectually engaging learning activities designed specifically for them. LLCs help students create a strong link between their lives in the residence hall and learning experiences in the classroom; provide an environment that is conducive to building a strong, cohesive peer support system that will serve the students throughout their academic and professional careers. Students who reside in an LLC enjoy all the same amenities as other residents, yet benefit from a unique living experience.
   Current LLCs
   - DreamKeepers
   - F.I.T.
   - Health and Wellness
   - Honors Program
   - ICEE House (Interdisciplinary Center for Early Career Exploration and Leadership)
   - Project M.A.R.C.H. (Male Aggies Resolved to Change History)
   - STEM
   - Teaching Fellows Program
   - Technology and Innovation

2. **Tracey Ford Center for Academic Excellence**
3. **Regina Artis Center for Academic Excellence**
4. **Latoya Harris Center for Academic Excellence**

5. **Brandon Johnson** **Center for Academic Excellence**
I currently serve as a coordinator of learning communities within my department. Specifically I serve as the coordinator for the Project M.A.R.C.H. male retention program and assist in coordinating operations of the remaining communities. These are our current LCs.
Project M.A.R.C.H**.** (Males Aggies Resolved to Change History) is a mentoring, advising and cultural development program designed to enhance the academic progress of FY male students.
S.I.S.T.E.R.S (Sisters Inspiring Success Through Education Reform and Service) is a mentoring program designed to promote the overall academic/social development of FY female students.
Marching to Success This program is designed to serve as an Academic Support System for members of the band.
6. **Antoinette Bonnie** **Associate Director, Residence Life**
Our program is fairly new. We currently have ten LLCs since 2000. The two learning communities that I work with specifically are the University Marching Band and S.I.S.T.E.R.S. (Students Inspiring Success Through Reform and Service- A female mentoring program within our department).

## North Carolina State University

1. **Robin McWilliams** **Director, SAY Village**
SAY Village (Students Advocating for Youth) is a community for those who desire to be life-long advocates for youth. We prepare students who want to lead and serve. This community reflects a commitment to improving the lives of disadvantaged children as well as a diverse and socially-conscious broadening of the transition from high school to college and beyond for village residents. We have 60 total residents and serve four schools in Wake County.

## University of North Carolina at Greensboro

1. **Laura Pipe** **Director of Learning Communities**
2. **Shakima Clency** **Associate Director of Learning Communities**

UNCG's Learning Community program is ever evolving and growing. With a long-standing commitment to learning communities through our well-established Residential College program (Warren Ashby RC is the oldest in the state), UNCG is dedicated to expanding the RC program through the further development of learning communities and living-learning communities. In the past three years, UNCG hired an inaugural director, established an office of learning communities, fostered faculty development around integrated learning, and established first year learning communities with integrated learning for over 50% of our first year student population for fall 2013. Our LC program is focused on integrated learning between two courses. This has been accomplished through either a Freshmen Interest Group model or linked courses. Currently we have voluntary enrollment, this fall having 34% (850) of our first year cohort enrolled in an LC.

Additionally, the Office of Learning Communities coordinates and supports the Faculty in Residence Program (FIR). This program was established in fall 2012 with two faculty living in the Quad area of campus, and will expand to four faculty living across campus in fall 2013. The FIRs participate in and facilitate academic based programmatic opportunities for residents of the Residence Halls and learning communities, thus fostering intentional out of the classroom interactions among students and faculty. The FIR serves as an academic role model, support and mentor for students living in their assigned Residence Halls and participates in learning community programs, thereby creating an environment that supports intellectual inquiry and lifelong learning both in and out of the classroom environment.

Lastly, the OLC oversees UNCG's partnership with *The New York Times*. This partnership includes participation in *The New York Times* in the First Year and *The New York Times in Leadership* programs. This includes supporting faculty involvement with the paper, as well as managing speaker and web-based presentations on campus. This month, UNCG will welcome Greg Winter, foreign editor of *The New York Times*, to campus as part of our partnership.

3. **John Sopper, Associate Dean, Undergraduate Studies**
College programs at UNCG. Having served as the Director of Grogan Residential College and as a UNCG team member at the National Summer Institute on Learning Communities at the Washington Center, Sopper is a longstanding supporter of Learning Communities.

4. **Tommy Lambeth Associate Professor, Interior Architecture**
Our IARc LC encompasses the entire first year of our Interior Architecture major. Students take two or three common classes each semester, all relating to design (two design studios, two graphic communication courses, and two history/theory courses. Normal design education pedagogies include this course commonality, and we have had to make minimal adjustments to transform our first year experience into the learning community model. Nonetheless, being part of the LC program is proving to be beneficial (this is our first year as an official LC). Design is by nature multidisciplinary and the LC status is helping us to further develop that as a focus. We would like to reach out to other departments in this effort as well, e.g. Art, Business, etc.

I am also involved in an LC for LC's for faculty; Laura and I sort of co-direct it (I say sort of because Laura is the mastermind and does all the work!). We have an energetic small group of around 10 or 15, and we have been able to compare notes on our diverse LC's and develop a dialogue on best practices. So far it has been a wonderful support group.

5. **Amanda Schipman Faculty Development Coordinator**
I work in the Faculty Teaching & Learning Commons where we sponsor numerous learning communities for those who teach - faculty and graduate students. I am an active participant in the Faculty Online Learning Community where we discuss online learning at UNCG.

6. **Patricia Fairfield Artman Assistant Professor, Communication**
My introduction to Learning Communities was at the Learning Conference in IND last Nov. - after several years teaching what was presented at the conference made more sense than all the conferences I've attended in the past focused on one discipline, one major, etc. I've connected with Laura P. and working w/her on the QEP proposal for UNCG and the direction for the future; am also doing a Lilly Conference workshop with faculty from other disciplines and our use of the New York Times. So, I'm a neophyte to LCs but strong supporter.

7. **Erica Farar Senior Assistant Director for Residence Life and Academic Initiatives**
Farar serves as the Housing and Residence Life liaison to the Office of Learning Communities, and coordinates five living-learning communities sponsored by Housing and Residence Life.

8. **Carola Dwyer Lecturer, German Languages**
Dwyer is one of inaugural two Faculty in Residence (FIRs) at UNCG currently. She supports the UNCG Global Village.

9. **Denise Gabriel Assistant Professor, Theater Faculty in Residence**
A faculty partner and support of the Learning Communities, Gabriel is currently part of a work group developing a Learning Community for UNCG's School of Music, Theater and Dance. Gabriel attend the National Learning Community Conference at Indianapolis this past fall.

10. **Dale Schunk Professor, Department of Teacher Education and Higher Education**
I am a professor in the School of Education and previously served for 10 years as dean of the school. I supervise the UNCG Teach learning community, for students interested in becoming teachers.

12. **Anne Barton Senior Faculty Fellow, Strong College**
Barton is the Senior Faculty Fellow of Strong College and lecturer in History. Barton has directed Strong College for five years. Strong College is organized similarly to a European-style College, with several longstanding traditions and programs. Currently, Strong students participate in a 1-credit reading course.

13. **Nancy Bucknall** **Director, A&S Advising Center**
I direct the College of Arts & Sciences Advising Center, which serves almost all first year majors in the College. I also provide the Dean with critical course availability information College-Wide, focusing primarily on our General Education offerings and enrollments. With those two hats, I work closely with our Office of Learning Communities to ensure that CAS majors have good experiences in their Learning Communities and that our General Education Course Availability is as strong as possible throughout the entire Registration Process. Finally, I'm participating in a Faculty Learning Community designed on improving teaching practices.

14. **Marin Burton** **Associate Director, Faculty Teaching and Learning Commons**
I am the Associate Director for the Faculty Teaching and Learning Commons (FTLC) at UNCG. We currently support 15 Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) serving approximately 100 faculty and staff centered on various topics related to teaching and learning. I co-facilitate the PLC on Experiential Education. In the past I have played a small role during training for those who teach within learning communities. I have also engaged in community development programs for some learning communities as an outside facilitator.

15. **Kristen Christmen** **Director, Undergraduate Student Excellence**
Undergraduate Student Excellence is focused on transitional programming for UNCG's undergraduate students. This includes the UNCG Guarantee Scholars program, Team Up with US, Student Academic Success programs, and the Academic Contract for Excellence Program.

16. **Steve Moore** **Director, Office of Transfer and Adult Student Success**
Moore's area guides and supports transfer and adult students through their academic career. Additionally, Moore is an active participant in Degrees Matter, and other key programs for creating access for non-traditional students, transfer students and adult learners.

17. **Ben Ramsey** **Senior Faculty Fellow, Warren Ashby Residential College**
Ramsey is the Senior Faculty Fellow of Ashby Residential College and Associate Professor in Religious Studies. Ramsey has served as a Faculty Fellow in Ashby for several years, and has taken over leadership of the program. Ashby is a traditional style residential college offering a robust set of general education courses, including a core lecture.

18. **Ariane Cox** **Associate Faculty Fellow, Grogan Residential College**
Cox is the Associate Faculty Fellow for Grogan Residential College and lecturer in Sociology. Cox has taught in several learning communities, and now is active in the leadership of the GRC. Grogan focuses on the professions (teaching, business, nursing, pre-med, etc.) through a Freshmen Interest Group model.

19. **Katy Green** **Career Counselor**
Hot topics for career development in the classrooms. Presentations that instructors would like to have from Career Services in their class

20. **Ivey Rudledge** **GA , AToMS LC**
I am currently a graduate assistant supporting the AToMS learning community, which is a first year program for STEM students at UNCG. It is academically based, offering support to freshman who are majoring in physics, math, chemistry, or computer science.

20. **Chrissy Flood** **Director of Core Curriculum**
***The Warren Ashby Residential College at Mary Foust Hall*** is an inclusive, two-year program that offers a unique living and learning environment for a co-ed student community of approximately 120 freshmen and sophomores with a limited number of Upper-Class Mentor participants. ARC offers the living and learning experience of a small liberal arts college but with immediate and complete access to the diverse facilities, programs, and departments of a larger university. ARC provides a setting that

encourages innovative study, small classes, unity of academic and social experiences, and close student-faculty contacts. Several faculty members maintain offices on the first floor of Mary Foust, including a Residential College Coordinator, a live-in faculty member. Every semester, the ARC curriculum includes approximately eighteen courses taught by faculty from departments across campus. These courses meet UNCG General Education Requirements (GEC) as well as requirements for a variety of majors.

## University of North Carolina at Pembroke

1. **Derek Oxendine** **Academic Advisor**
   American Indian Learning Community
2. **Allen Todd** **Academic Advisor**
   Undecided Student Learning Community

## Wake Forest University, Winston Salem, NC

**Christy Buchanan Associate Dean for Academic Advising**

WFU does not have a LC program as such although we are looking for ways to create a stronger connection between learning and intellectual life on the one hand and students' extracurricular activities on the other. Starting in fall 2013, faculty will be involved in first-year residence halls through a "Faculty Fellows" program. We have some theme houses. The Dean has recently funded a linked courses initiative. As new Associate Dean for Academic Advising, I'd like to learn more about practices to make advising more vibrant and linked to students' lives.

## Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, NC

1. **Glenda Hensley** **Director, First Year Experience**
2. **Janina Dehart** **Assistant Director for Academic Transition/Success – FYE**

WCU elected to move forward with our mission from a “bottom-up” approach, with initiatives and community ideas that emerge directly from LC practitioners - faculty and staff working together. My office provides logistical, organizational, and professional support to help faculty and staff teams implement strategies that will enable us to accomplish their LC vision and goals in a way that strengthens the student learning experience and empowers faculty and staff. Our Faculty/Staff Learning Community for Learning Communities elected to focus on first-year communities initially so that we could centralize some of the organizational and support mechanisms through FYE. Our office also coordinates with the Faculty Commons to provide professional development and scholarship opportunities.

We offer a variety of Learning Community models for first-year students, hoping to be responsive to the goals and needs of each team and discipline goals. Following are our current offerings.

- 3 Curricular LCs: These link 2 or more courses around either a theme or disciplinary perspective. Course types vary with each LC.
- 1 Curricular-LLC: WHEE Teach is a discipline based LC that includes 3 courses, a student organization, and residential support. (7 cr/hrs total)
- 8 LLCs: The LEAD LLCs are themed communities with one first-year FYE course, residential programing, and an introduction to Leadership principles. (2 cr/hrs)
- 1 Coordinated Studies FYE-LC: The Academic Success Program combines a fully coordinated summer structure with continued (but limited) common LLC structures in the fall.

3. **Robert Crow** **Coordinator of Instructional Development & Assessment**

I am a member of both the FYE Cabinet and the Faculty Learning Community on Learning Communities and thus in a position to with the LC faculty to help develop curricular and assessment ideas that will support the goals of the LC and of the practitioners involved. The CFC provides lots of professional development opportunities and resources for all faculty.

4. **Belinda Petricek Academic Advisor**
   I work with the WHEE Teach, a Curricular LLC - The College of Education & Allied Professions has teamed up with the student organization WHEE TEACH to create a dynamic first year experience for our students interested in becoming educators.

5. **Pat Proffitt Lecturer**
   I work with WHEE Teach, a Curricular LLC, and teach the First-year Seminar *EDCI 191 - Teachers, Schools, and Society LLC: What is Education For?* The seminar is designed for students seeking an education degree. The course provides a field experience opportunity for students to be actively engaged with K-12 pupils in a local school. As a community of learners, students study the growth and development of the learner, gain insight into the nature of teaching, and examine the critical issues facing education in America today.

6. **John Habel Professor, Psychology**
   I have been participating in a new learning community, "Flourishing," for the last two and a half years. It is a Curricular, sequential LC in which first year students take my FYS in Psychology in the fall and then their freshman composition course with Margaret Bruder in the spring. Both classes are focused around a common theme.

7. **Margaret Bruder Associate Professor, English**
   I have been participating in learning communities for the last two and a half years. "Flourishing" is an Curricular, sequential LC in which first year students take a Psychology seminar in the fall with John Habel, and then their freshman composition course with me. Both classes are focused around a common theme. Before that, I was involved with the Collins-Living-Learning Center at Indiana University Bloomington where I taught a class and co-conducted a film series for several years.

8. **Tacquice Wiggan Assistant Director for Leadership Programs**
   I oversee the Leadership component of our LEAD LLCs at Western Carolina University. This includes collaborating with residential staff, FYE Transition curriculum planning, and Leadership programs. We have 10 one-semester living-learning learning communities that are based around a transitions and/or leadership class with a particular theme. These include: Band of Brothers, Secrets of Powerful Women, The Creative Life, Global Awareness & Citizenship, Freshman Leadership Institute, Going Green, Cultural Competency & Social Action, and Digital Culture.

9. **Stephanie Sue Helmers Assistant Director of Academic Initiative in Residential Living**
   I oversee the residential component of our living-learning communities at Western Carolina University. This includes coordinating the residential staff and insuring that RAs, Resident Directors, and Academic Resource Coordinators are working to reinforce the theme of the living-learning community in the residence hall. We have 10 one-semester living-learning learning communities that are based around a transitions and/or leadership class with a particular theme. These include: Band of Brothers, Secrets of Powerful Women, Whee Teach, The Creative Life, Global Awareness & Citizenship, Freshman Leadership Institute, Going Green, Cultural Competency & Social Action, Digital Culture, and The Academic Success Program.

10. **Kevin Metcalf , GA, Academic Resource Consultant in Residential Living**
11. **Anastasia Richards, GA, Academic Resource Consultant in Residential Living**

    The ARCs coordinate the residential aspect of Living-Learning Communities at WCU. The ARC works directly with the Resident Assistant providing supervision to programming efforts that tie the in- and out-of class experience. The ARC is also available to the instructor of the LEAD class to provide support in the classroom as needed. Each ARC is responsible for 2 – 3 Communities and works with approximately 6 RAs and 3 – 6 Instructors.

# Liberal Education & America's Promise

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Excellence for Everyone as a Nation Goes to College

Purposeful Pathways, Essential Learning Outcomes, High Student Achievement

## Starting in School...

- ★ Rigorous and rich curriculum focused on essential learning outcomes (see reverse)
- ★ Comprehensive, individualized, and learning centered advising
- ★ Participation in service learning and civic engagement activities
- ★ Substantive culminating projects assessed for achievement of essential learning outcomes

## Deepened Through Challenging Studies in College, including...

- ★ Broad integrative learning in the liberal arts and sciences—focused by engagement with big questions, both contemporary and enduring
- ★ Analytical, applied and integrative learning across all major fields, both preprofessional and liberal arts and sciences
- ★ Active involvement with diverse communities, real-world problems, and social responsibility
- ★ Milestone and culminating experiences that connect general, major, and field-learning contexts

## With a Constant Focus on the Essential Learning Outcomes...

(see reverse)

- ★ From school through college
- ★ Across general education and majors, curriculum and cocurriculum
- ★ At progressively more challenging levels
- ★ Evaluated consistently through milestone and capstone assessments
- ★ For **all students**—including and especially those from underserved communities

## Enriched by Student Engagement in High-Impact Educational Practices...

- ★ First-year seminars and experiences
- ★ Common intellectual experiences
- ★ Learning communities
- ★ Writing-intensive courses
- ★ Collaborative assignments and projects
- ★ Undergraduate research
- ★ Diversity and global learning
- ★ Service and community-based learning
- ★ Internships
- ★ Capstone courses and projects

LEAP

# Liberal Education & America's Promise

Excellence for Everyone as a Nation Goes to College

A Framework to Guide Student Learning and Educational Planning From School Through College

## *The Essential Learning Outcomes*

### Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World

- Through study in the sciences and mathematics, social sciences, humanities, histories, languages, and the arts

***Focused*** by engagement with big questions, both contemporary and enduring

### Intellectual and Practical Skills, including

- Inquiry and analysis
- Critical and creative thinking
- Written and oral communication
- Quantitative literacy
- Information literacy
- Teamwork and problem solving

***Practiced*** extensively, across the curriculum, in the context of progressively more challenging problems, projects, and standards for performance

### Personal and Social Responsibility, including

- Civic knowledge and engagement—local and global
- Intercultural knowledge and competence
- Ethical reasoning and action
- Foundations and skills for lifelong learning

***Anchored*** through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges

### Integrative and Applied Learning, including

- Synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies

***Demonstrated*** through the application of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems

Note: Reprinted from Association of American Colleges and Universities, *College Learning for the New Global Century* (Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2007), 12.

LEAP

# *The Principles of Excellence*

## Principle One

### Aim High—and Make Excellence Inclusive

Make the Essential Learning Outcomes a Framework for the Entire Educational Experience, Connecting School, College, Work, and Life

## Principle Two

### Give Students a Compass

Focus Each Student's Plan of Study on Achieving the Essential Learning Outcomes—and Assess Progress

## Principle Three

### Teach the Arts of Inquiry and Innovation

Immerse All Students in Analysis, Discovery, Problem Solving, and Communication, Beginning in School and Advancing in College

## Principle Four

### Engage the Big Questions

Teach through the Curriculum to Far-Reaching Issues—Contemporary and Enduring—in Science and Society, Cultures and Values, Global Interdependence, the Changing Economy, and Human Dignity and Freedom

## Principle Five

### Connect Knowledge with Choices and Action

Prepare Students for Citizenship and Work through Engaged and Guided Learning on "Real-World" Problems

## Principle Six

### Foster Civic, Intercultural, and Ethical Learning

Emphasize Personal and Social Responsibility, in Every Field of Study

## Principle Seven

### Assess Students' Ability to Apply Learning to Complex Problems

Use Assessment to Deepen Learning and to Establish a Culture of Shared Purpose and Continuous Improvement

LEAP

# *The Essential Learning Outcomes*

**Beginning in school, and continuing at successively higher levels across their college studies, students should prepare for twenty-first-century challenges by gaining:**

## Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World

- Through study in the sciences and mathematics, social sciences, humanities, histories, languages, and the arts

***Focused*** *by engagement with big questions, both contemporary and enduring*

## Intellectual and Practical Skills, including

- Inquiry and analysis
- Critical and creative thinking
- Written and oral communication
- Quantitative literacy
- Information literacy
- Teamwork and problem solving

***Practiced extensively****, across the curriculum, in the context of progressively more challenging problems, projects, and standards for performance*

## Personal and Social Responsibility, including

- Civic knowledge and engagement—local and global
- Intercultural knowledge and competence
- Ethical reasoning and action
- Foundations and skills for lifelong learning

***Anchored*** *through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges*

## Integrative and Applied Learning, including

- Synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies

***Demonstrated*** *through the application of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems*

**Note:** This listing was developed through a multiyear dialogue with hundreds of colleges and universities about needed goals for student learning; analysis of a long series of recommendations and reports from the business community; and analysis of the accreditation requirements for engineering, business, nursing, and teacher education. The findings are documented in previous publications of the Association of American Colleges and Universities: *Greater Expectations: A New Vision for Learning as a Nation Goes to College* (2002), *Taking Responsibility for the Quality of the Baccalaureate Degree* (2004), and *College Learning for the New Global Century* (2007). For further information, see www.aacu.org/leap.

LEAP

# High-Impact Educational Practices

## First-Year Seminars and Experiences

Many schools now build into the curriculum first-year seminars or other programs that bring small groups of students together with faculty or staff on a regular basis. The highest-quality first-year experiences place a strong emphasis on critical inquiry, frequent writing, information literacy, collaborative learning, and other skills that develop students' intellectual and practical competencies. First-year seminars can also involve students with cutting-edge questions in scholarship and with faculty members' own research.

## Common Intellectual Experiences

The older idea of a "core" curriculum has evolved into a variety of modern forms, such as a set of required common courses or a vertically organized general education program that includes advanced integrative studies and/or required participation in a learning community (see below). These programs often combine broad themes—e.g., technology and society, global interdependence—with a variety of curricular and cocurricular options for students.

## Learning Communities

The key goals for learning communities are to encourage integration of learning across courses and to involve students with "big questions" that matter beyond the classroom. Students take two or more linked courses as a group and work closely with one another and with their professors. Many learning communities explore a common topic and/or common readings through the lenses of different disciplines. Some deliberately link "liberal arts" and "professional courses"; others feature service learning.

## Writing-Intensive Courses

These courses emphasize writing at all levels of instruction and across the curriculum, including final-year projects. Students are encouraged to produce and revise various forms of writing for different audiences in different disciplines. The effectiveness of this repeated practice "across the curriculum" has led to parallel efforts in such areas as quantitative reasoning, oral communication, information literacy, and, on some campuses, ethical inquiry.

## Collaborative Assignments and Projects

Collaborative learning combines two key goals: learning to work and solve problems in the company of others, and sharpening one's own understanding by listening seriously to the insights of others, especially those with different backgrounds and life experiences. Approaches range from study groups within a course, to team-based assignments and writing, to cooperative projects and research.

LEAP

## Undergraduate Research

Many colleges and universities are now providing research experiences for students in all disciplines. Undergraduate research, however, has been most prominently used in science disciplines. With strong support from the National Science Foundation and the research community, scientists are reshaping their courses to connect key concepts and questions with students' early and active involvement in systematic investigation and research. The goal is to involve students with actively contested questions, empirical observation, cutting-edge technologies, and the sense of excitement that comes from working to answer important questions.

## Diversity/Global Learning

Many colleges and universities now emphasize courses and programs that help students explore cultures, life experiences, and worldviews different from their own. These studies—which may address U.S. diversity, world cultures, or both—often explore "difficult differences" such as racial, ethnic, and gender inequality, or continuing struggles around the globe for human rights, freedom, and power. Frequently, intercultural studies are augmented by experiential learning in the community and/or by study abroad.

## Service Learning, Community-Based Learning

In these programs, field-based "experiential learning" with community partners is an instructional strategy—and often a required part of the course. The idea is to give students direct experience with issues they are studying in the curriculum and with ongoing efforts to analyze and solve problems in the community. A key element in these programs is the opportunity students have to both *apply* what they are learning in real-world settings and *reflect* in a classroom setting on their service experiences. These programs model the idea that giving something back to the community is an important college outcome, and that working with community partners is good preparation for citizenship, work, and life.

## Internships

Internships are another increasingly common form of experiential learning. The idea is to provide students with direct experience in a work setting—usually related to their career interests—and to give them the benefit of supervision and coaching from professionals in the field. If the internship is taken for course credit, students complete a project or paper that is approved by a faculty member.

## Capstone Courses and Projects

Whether they're called "senior capstones" or some other name, these culminating experiences require students nearing the end of their college years to create a project of some sort that integrates and applies what they've learned. The project might be a research paper, a performance, a portfolio of "best work," or an exhibit of artwork. Capstones are offered both in departmental programs and, increasingly, in general education as well.

Table 1

## Relationships between Selected High-Impact Activities, Deep Learning, and Self-Reported Gains

| | Deep Learning | Gains General | Gains Personal | Gains Practical |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| First-Year | | | | |
| Learning Communities | +++ | ++ | ++ | ++ |
| Service Learning | +++ | ++ | +++ | ++ |
| Senior | | | | |
| Study Abroad | ++ | + | ++ | |
| Student-Faculty Research | +++ | ++ | ++ | ++ |
| Service Learning | ++ | +++ | +++ | ++ |
| Senior Culminating Experience | ++ | ++ | +++ | ++ |

+ p < .001, ++ p < .001 & Unstd B > .10, +++ p < .001 & Unstd B > .30

Table 2

## Relationships between Selected High-Impact Activities and Clusters of Effective Educational Practices

| | Level of Academic Challenge | Active and Collaborative Learning | Student-Faculty Interaction | Supportive Campus Environment |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| First-Year | | | | |
| Learning Communities | ++ | +++ | +++ | ++ |
| Service Learning | ++ | +++ | +++ | ++ |
| Senior | | | | |
| Study Abroad | ++ | ++ | ++ | + |
| Student-Faculty Research | +++ | +++ | +++ | ++ |
| Service Learning | ++ | +++ | +++ | ++ |
| Senior Culminating Experience | ++ | ++ | +++ | ++ |

+ p < .001, ++ p < .001 & Unstd B > .10, +++ p < .001 & Unstd B > .30

Source: *High-Impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access to Them, and Why They Matter* by George D. Kuh, (Washington, DC: AAC&U, 2008). For information and more resources and research from LEAP, see www.aacu.org/leap.

# Learning Better Together: The Impact of Learning Communities on Student Success*

Vincent Tinto
Syracuse University

Despite recent innovations, it remains the case that most students experience universities as isolated learners whose learning is disconnected from that of others. They continue to engage in solo performance and demonstration in what remains a largely show-and-tell learning environment. The experience of learning in higher education is, for most students, still very much a "spectator sport" in which faculty talk dominates and where there are few active student participants. Just as importantly, students typically take courses as detached, individual units, one course separated from another in both content and peer group, one set of understandings unrelated in any intentional fashion to what is learned in other courses. Though there are majors, there is little academic or social coherence to student learning. It is little wonder then that students seem so uninvolved in learning. Their learning experiences are not very involving.

Fortunately, there is change. Partly in response to a series of reports in the 1980's by the National Institute of Education (1984), the Association of American Colleges (1985), and studies in the late 1980's and early 1990's by scholars such as Astin (1987), Boyer (1987), and Tinto (1987), a growing number of institutions have begun to reform educational practice and restructure classrooms to more actively involve students in learning. One such effort that is gaining increased attention is that encompassed by learning communities and the collaborative pedagogy that underlies them. Unlike many programs which exist at the periphery of the academic experiences of students, learning communities seek to restructure the very classrooms in which students find themselves and alter the way students experience both the curriculum and learning within those classrooms.[i]

## Learning Communities in Higher Education

Learning communities, in their most basic form, begin with a kind of co-registration or block scheduling that enables students to take courses together, rather than apart. In some cases, learning communities will link students by tying two courses together, typically a course in writing with a course in selected literature or current social problems (Linked Courses). In other cases, it may mean sharing the entire first-semester curriculum so that

* Higher Education Monograph Series, 2003-1, Higher Education Program, School of Education, Syracuse University.

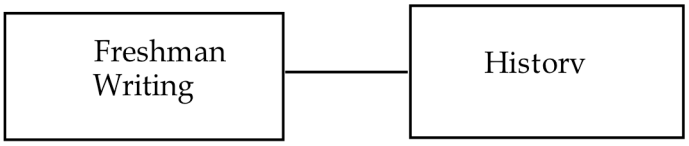
students in the learning community study the same material throughout the semester. In some large universities such as the University of Oregon and the University of Washington, the twenty-five to thirty students in a learning community may attend lectures with 200-300 other students but stay together for a smaller discussion section, often called the Freshman Interest Group, led by a graduate student or upperclassman. In still other cases, students will take all their classes together either as separate, but linked, classes (Cluster Learning Communities) or as one large class that meets four to six hours at a time several times a week (Coordinated Studies) (See Figure I).

The courses in which students co-register are not coincidental or random. They are typically connected by an organizing theme which gives meaning to their linkage. The point of doing so is to engender a coherent interdisciplinary or cross-subject learning that is not easily attainable through enrollment in unrelated, stand-alone courses. For example, the Coordinated Studies Program at Seattle Central Community College entitled "Body and Mind" which links courses in human biology, psychology, and sociology, asks students to consider how the connected fields of study pursue a singular piece of knowledge, namely how and why humans behave as they do.

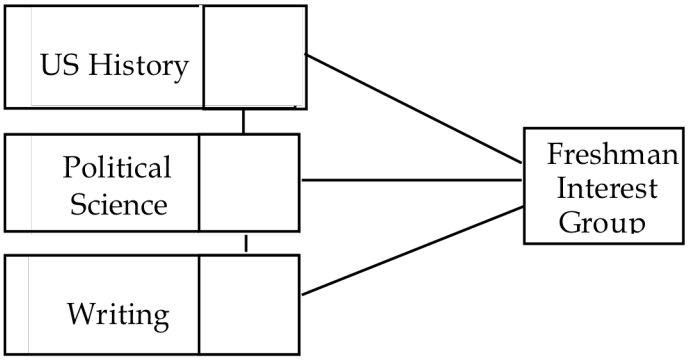
As described by Gablenick and her colleagues in their 1990 book *Learning Communities: Creating Connections among Students, Faculty, and Disciplines*, many learning communities do more than co-register students around a topic. They change the manner in which students experience the curriculum and the way they are taught. Faculty have reorganized their syllabi and their classrooms to promote shared, collaborative learning experiences among students across the linked classrooms. This form of classroom organization requires students to work together in some form of collaborative groups and to become active, indeed responsible, for the learning of both group and classroom peers. In this way, students are asked to share not only the experience of the curriculum, but also of learning within the curriculum.

Though the content may vary, nearly all the learning communities have three things in common. One is *shared knowledge*. By requiring students to take courses together and organizing those courses around a theme, learning communities seek to construct a shared, coherent curricular experience that is not just an unconnected array of courses in, say, composition, calculus, history, Spanish, and geology. In doing so, they seek to promote higher levels of cognitive complexity that cannot easily be obtained through participation in unrelated courses. The second is *shared knowing*. Learning communities enroll the same students in several classes so they get to know each other quickly and fairly intimately in a way that is part and parcel of their academic experience. By asking students to construct knowledge together, learning communities seek to involve students both socially and intellectually in ways that promote cognitive development as well as an appreciation for the many ways in which one's own knowing is enhanced when other voices are part of that learning experience. The third is *shared responsibility*. Learning communities ask students to become responsible to each other in the process of trying to know. They participate in collaborative groups which require students to be mutually dependent on one another so that the learning of the group does not advance

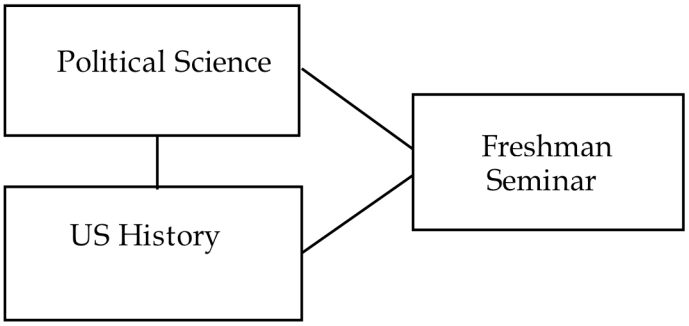
**LINKED COURSES**




**FRESHMAN INTEREST GROUPS**




**CLUSTER COURSES**




**COORDINATED STUDIES**

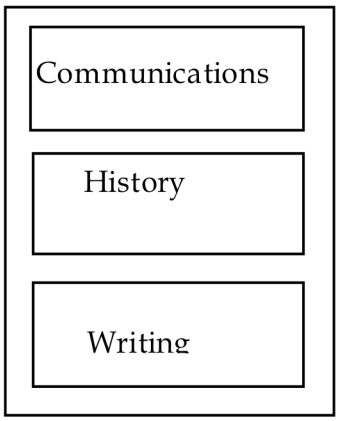



**Figure I: Common Types of Learning Communities**

without each member doing her or his part.

As a curricular structure, learning communities can be applied to any content and any group of students. Most often, they are designed for the needs of beginning students. In those instance, one of the linked courses becomes a Freshman Seminar. Increasingly, they are also being adapted to the needs of undecided students and students who require developmental academic assistance[ii]. In these cases, one of the linked courses may be a career exploration and/or developmental advising course or, in the latter case, a "learning to learn" or study skills course. One or more courses may also be developmental in character. In residential campuses, some learning communities have moved into the residence halls. These "living learning communities" combine shared courses with shared living. Students, typically those beginning their first semester of college, enroll in a number of linked courses and living together in a reserved part of a residence hall.

More recently, a number of learning communities have used community service as a linking activity or theme for learning communities. In some cases, at The Evergreen State College, Portland State University, St. Lawrence University, and in colleges in the Maricopa Community College District they have added service learning to one or more of the linked courses. As an extension of traditional models of community service and experiential learning, service learning combines intentional educational activities with service experience to meet critical needs identified by the communities being served. Unlike voluntarism, service-learning is a pedagogical strategy, an inductive approach to education, grounded in the assumption that thoughtfully organized experience is the foundation for learning (Jacoby, 1996). When connected to learning communities and the collaborative pedagogy that underlies them, service learning becomes a shared experience in which students and faculty are able to engage in time-intensive, interdisciplinary study of complex social problems that may be used to apply and test theory learned in the classroom or to generate knowledge from experience. In either case, service learning in a collaborative setting seems to promote not only the acquisition of course content, but also enhanced intellectual development and a shared sense of responsibility for the welfare of others (Jacoby, 1994).

When applied to particular groups of students, as described above, the "faculty" of the learning community almost always combine the work of both academic and student affairs professionals. Indeed such learning communities call for, indeed require, the collaborative efforts of both parties. This is the case because the staff of student affairs are typically the only persons on campus who possess the skills and knowledge needed to teach some of the linked courses. Take the case of learning communities for students requiring developmental assistance. In Cluster Learning Communities, for example, the "faculty" of the learning community may consist of a faculty person who teaches a regular introductory course in Economics and two members of a learning support center who teach developmental writing and mathematics.

To be effective, learning communities require their "faculty", that is the academic and student affairs professionals who staff the learning community, to collaborate on both

the content and pedagogy of the linked courses. They have to work together, as equal partners, to ensure that the linked courses provide a coherent shared learning experience. One of the many benefits of such collaboration, where all voices are heard, is that the academic staff come to "discover" the wealth of knowledge that student affairs professionals bring to the discourse about teaching and learning.[iii] Furthermore, in leaving, at least momentarily, their respective silos, both come to discover the many benefits of looking at one's work from fresh eyes.

**Research on Learning Communities**

Though there is growing interest in learning communities, most programs are in their infancy and evidence of their impact is spotty at best. Our view of the efficacy of learning communities is largely the result of anecdotal evidence and periodic institutional reports or assessments that are reported at conferences and national meetings. That is until recently. A recent study carried out by this author under the auspices of the National Center for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment ( a research center funded by a five year grant from the U.S. Office of Education) explored the impact of learning community programs upon the academic and social behavior and persistence of new students in three different institutional settings, specifically the University of Washington, LaGuardia Community College in New York City, and Seattle Central Community College.

Though intentionally limited in scope, that research yielded a number of important insights into the impacts of learning communities on student learning and persistence. First, students in learning communities tended to form their own self-supporting groups which extended beyond the classroom. Learning community students spent more time together out of class than did students in traditional, unrelated stand-alone classes and they did so in ways which students saw as supportive. Indeed, some students at the urban community colleges saw those groups as critical to their ability to continue in college. Second, learning community students became more actively involved in classroom learning, even after class. They spent more time learning together both inside and outside the class. In this way, learning communities enabled students to bridge the divide between academic classes and student social conduct that frequently characterizes student life. They tended to learn and make friends at the same time. And as students spent more time together learning, they learned more. Third, participation in the learning community seemed to enhance the quality of student learning. By learning together everyone's understanding and knowledge was, in the eyes of the participants, enriched. As the same time, students in the learning community programs perceived themselves as having made significantly greater intellectual gains over the course of the semester than did similar students in the comparison classes. Fourth, as students learned more and saw themselves as more engaged both academically and socially, they persisted at a substantially higher rate than did comparable students in the traditional curriculum. At Seattle Central Community College, for example, learning community students continued at a rate approximately twenty-five percentage points higher than did students in the traditional curriculum.

Finally, student participants' stories highlighted powerful messages about the value

of collaborative learning settings in fostering what could be called "the norms of educational citizenship," that is to say norms which promote the notion that individual educational welfare is tied inexorably to the educational welfare and interests of other members of the educational community. Students in these programs reported an increased sense of responsibility to participate in the learning experience, and an awareness of their responsibility for both their learning and the learning of others.

**Concluding Observation**

Learning communities do not represent a "magic bullet" to student learning. Like any other pedagogy, there are limits to their effectiveness. Some students do not like learning with others and some faculty find collaborating with other faculty and staff difficult. Nevertheless, like other efforts to enhance student involvement in learning such as cooperative learning and classroom assessment, there is ample evidence to support the contention that their application enhances student learning and persistence and enriches faculty professional lives (Cross, 1998). Little wonder then that so many institutions have recently initiated learning communities and a number of foundations have established programs to support their development.

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## Footnotes

[1] Learning communities are not new. In the United States, they date back to the early work of the philosopher and educational theorist Alexander Meiklejohn and to the Experimental College at the University of Wisconsin which he helped established in 1927 (Meiklejohn, 1932). However, like Joseph Tussman's experiment at the University of California at Berkeley (1969), early learning communities were limited in scope and in the students they served. The current movement, led over the past twelve years by the Washington Center at The Evergreen State College, is different not only because it involves a greater range of institutions public and private, two and four-year, but also because it is being adapted to the learning needs of a broad range of students.

[2] A variant on this theme of providing assistance through linked courses is supplemental instruction (Blance, De Buhr & Martin, 1983). In this model of academic assistance, students participate in the regular courses with the proviso that they also attend supplemental instruction groups that meet, with a peer tutor, outside of class for one or more hours per week. Academic assistance is provided in those groups, often in a cooperative manner, and is timed to address the changing demands of the course to which the groups are attached. In this manner, supplemental instruction represents a type of learning community which links a remedial unit to a regular class. It is, to borrow the language of those who work with learning communities, a type of "linked course."

[3] One of the ironies of this situation is that the typical student affairs professional knows more about student learning than does the typical faculty member. Least we forget, the faculty are the only members of the teaching profession, from kindergarten through college, who are not trained to teach their own students. Neither the students they wish they had nor the students they do have.

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# A New Era in Learning-Community Work: Why the Pedagogy of Intentional Integration Matters

*by Emily Lardner and Gillies Malnarich*

*Everyone is entitled to an education of quality.*
*—Greater Expectations*, AAC&U Report, 2002

Each January, the Washington Center at The Evergreen State College has preliminary talks with campus teams that have been accepted for our National Summer Institute on Learning Communities in June. We look forward to these conversations, because from them we discover a lot about learning communities on very different campuses. Without exception, wherever hardworking faculty, staff, and administrators organize learning communities and students come, the reward is gratifying and immediate: The student retention rate goes up, just as the literature predicts. Institutional attention then shifts to scaling-up the work.

The pressure is on at that point to offer technical advice and an appropriate model for this scaling-up. But we resist this pressure. Instead, we now respond to teams' applications by asking another set of questions: Which students will be included? Why these courses? What kind of learning do you want students to experience? And so on. In other words, we deliberately shift attention away from the creation of learning-community models to the generation of learning.

While improved retention is a welcome consequence of learning-community work, it has never been its aim. In the push to improve student retention, it is easy to overlook what research tells us: Students persist in their studies if the learning they experience is meaningful, deeply engaging, and relevant to their lives. We know from campus visits—especially sitting in on classes—that if institutional energy goes to designing models and organizational structures without a similar attentiveness to teaching and learning, opportunities are squandered. The camaraderie of co-enrollment may help students stay in school longer, but learning communities can offer more: curricular coherence; integrative, high-quality learning; collaborative knowledge-construction; and skills and knowledge relevant to living in a complex, messy, diverse world.

In this article, we discuss this transition in the agenda for learning communities. We report on developments in the field with this question in mind: How can we best organize and teach for high-quality learning for all students?

Alert readers will note how this reference—"for all students"—ties effective learning-community work to an agenda for educational equity. Re-framing the Washington Center's support and advocacy for learning communities to include support for the academic achievement of all college students has led to a recasting of taken-for-granted approaches. In this sense, we are in accord with the Association of American Colleges and Universities' (AAC&U) 2007 report, *College Learning in the New Global Century*, which asserts that in the 21st century, we need to retool

the elitist 20th-century liberal-education curriculum to be a "liberating education" for all: "Every student—not just the fortunate few—will need wide-ranging and cross-disciplinary knowledge, higher-level skills, an active sense of personal and social responsibility, and a demonstrated ability to apply knowledge to complex problems."

Key practices characterize this next iteration of learning-community work. We expect that every learning community will design and implement integrative assignments for their student cohort; we think this practice is as foundational to learning-community work as teaching for active, collaborative learning. So we now introduce learning communities to a new generation of educators by inviting them to design integrative assignments with their colleagues; we encourage them to try these "assignment links" even with students whom they do not share, so that more students will experience integrative learning.

And in our National Project on Assessing Learning in Learning Communities, we look at student work for evidence of the integrative learning that learning communities claim as both organizational and pedagogical justification. We also appreciate that the pedagogy of intentional integration entails a new direction for faculty development. Learning-community work done well thus requires a skillful balancing of two moves: one structural, the other pedagogical and cross-disciplinary. When a campus gets it right, enriched integrative learning is the result. When a campus doesn't, retention data improves, at least in the short run, but the substantive, multi-faceted, and deep learning that learning communities can engender too often remains underdeveloped.

To describe this new era in learning-community work, we took a close look at the applications campuses have submitted for the National Summer Institute on Learning Communities, looking for changes over time. Our hypothesis was that an analysis of team applications might reveal advances in learning-community practice, as well as indicating directions we need to pursue.

**How are Campuses Thinking About Learning Communities?**

To answer this question, we compared the applications for the institute of the 2004 group (the first cohort to pay the full costs of the institute since it began in 1998) and those received in 2008. As we analyzed the applications for these two cohorts, we noticed several shifts in the way campuses approach learning communities.

First, in 2008 most campuses appear comfortable using data to make decisions about instructional programs. Second, many of the 2008 campuses claim that they have an explicit goal to increase student engagement, with over half the campuses using the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) or the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) to help them track their progress toward this goal. Finally, more campuses (though still less than half) are making a strong connection between their desire to implement learning communities and their vision of the kind of learning experiences they want students to have. We examine each of these shifts in more detail below.

***Using data to make decisions about instructional programs***

Only one campus team in 2004 explicitly linked its proposed learning-community program to improving academic achievement. More typical was "project-itis," the tendency to launch projects as ends in themselves rather than as means for institutional transformation. Campus teams in 2004 typically wanted to pick, and learn how to implement, particular learning-community models (one campus had five different models, and its goal was to create an administrative structure to manage them all).

Teams attending the 2008 institute appear more interested in using data to make decisions about the purposes of their learning communities, from which they will derive their structures. This may be due in part to the fact that the application for the institute itself has changed: Whereas in 2004 we asked teams to describe the goals for their programs, in 2008 we asked first for information about campus demographics, student academic preparedness, and student success, as well as faculty and staff awareness about this information. We also asked teams to discuss what their institutional data suggested about curricular trouble-spots and whether the data had changed over time.

All campuses provided this information, and all but two directly connected their campus data with their goals for their learning-community programs. The most prevalent new task is related to the equity agenda mentioned earlier: to direct the disciplinary expertise, ingenuity, and pedagogical prowess of teaching teams to sites in the curriculum where students struggle the most and/or where the deep understanding of a key idea will reveal connections that compartmentalized learning leaves undiscovered.

For example, Fayetteville State University started a learning-community program several years ago to support the academic achievement of African-American men. That program's success has led to several related learning communities designed for other cohorts. Meanwhile, South Plains College has used its Title V grant to increase the retention of Hispanic students. Having analyzed what might lead to such an increase, they want to develop learning communities around courses that are especially difficult for academically under-prepared students. And Augustana College has used the Collegiate Learning Assessment to assess students' critical thinking; they want to improve their already strong results by using a learning-community component in their first-year liberal studies courses.

On campuses with longstanding programs, the task of connecting the program with institutional data is more complicated. Having developed their learning communities before they collected data, those institutions now need to retro-fit these communities. The once-common practice of two or more faculty members getting together to plan a learning community based on their own interests—quite apart from an explicit set of learning goals and/or students' learning needs in relation to those goals—has to change. Disaggregated data about access, persistence, and graduation for different groups of students needs to be discussed and understood before teaching partnerships are established.

***Focusing on student engagement***

Another shift evident in our analysis of team applications is the increase in the number of campuses using either the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) or the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). Both ask students whether they have had experiences that the research suggests promote and strengthen high-level learning, persistence, and retention. Campus results examined in relation to those of peer institutions raise the question, "How good is good enough?"

The CCSSE focuses on active and collaborative learning, student effort, academic challenge, student-faculty interaction, and support for learners. The NSSE examines two components of engagement: what students do and what institutions do. Students answer questions related to the time and effort spent on educationally purposeful activities. Their responses are clustered under five benchmarks of effective practice: level of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student-faculty interaction, enriching educational experiences, and supportive campus environment.

One out of the 17 campuses attending the institute in 2004 reported using either the CCSSE or the NSSE; 14 out of 24 teams coming to the institute in 2008 report using one or the other. The one team in 2004 that was using the CCSSE had an unusual focus for that time; rather than making a learning-community model central to its plan, the team concentrated on helping faculty create integrative assignments, whether they were teaching the same cohort of students or not.

This explicit emphasis on engagement across the curriculum led to a watershed moment at the 2004 institute. The team's approach generated resistance from some long-time learning-community consultants because they felt that the campus was not proposing a "real" learning community. Heated discussion ensued. The conflict illuminated the challenge of moving away from a learning-community "project" model—where developing learning communities for students is an end in itself—to an institutional-improvement approach, where learning communities become a means for improving students' academic achievement through engaged learning.

In nearly all the applications for 2008, teams write that their goal is to increase student retention, student engagement, and academic achievement, and they want to find ways to design learning communities to help this happen. They are less concerned with doing learning communities "right" and more about student success.

### *Focusing on the quality of students' learning*

Research undertaken in Sweden, the United Kingdom, and Australia has led to a distinction between deep and surface learning. According to Noel Entwistle, in a surface approach students cope with course requirements in a minimalist way, skim texts to spot test questions, understand only what is needed to pass tests, and reduce course content to discrete bits of knowledge. In a deep approach, students try to understand ideas for themselves, seek out patterns and underlying principles, examine evidence in relation to conclusions, and critically appraise the logic of arguments.

For faculty who want students to become deep learners, learning communities are an attractive option. However, integrative learning cannot happen if "coverage" is the aim. Abilities-based education—an emphasis on what we want students to know and be able to do within the context of a course, a discipline, and their entire undergraduate education—is an alternative to designing a curriculum based on lists of topics.

This emphasis on deep learning is becoming increasingly widespread. In *College Learning in the New Global Century*, the Association of American Colleges and Universities has this to say: "It is the quality of learning, not the possession of a diploma, that will make all the difference—to individuals, to an economy dependent on innovation, and to the integrity of the democracy we create together." Four essential learning outcomes for all graduating students are associated with a high-quality collegiate education. One is integrative learning. The other three—personal and social responsibility, intellectual and practical skills, and knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world—also represent learning beyond the expected professional, technical, and disciplinary expertise.

In 2004, only one of the teams attending the institute mentioned the kind of learning they wanted students to gain from their learning-community program. In 2008, close to one third of the teams—though still less than half—did so. For instance, the Malcolm X College team wrote that their learning-community program "will encourage student engagement in learning and will be taught actively, using problem-based teaching and learning." The intended outcomes for the program—increased student engagement, retention, and success—will be achieved at Malcolm X by deepening the learning experience, developing community, and adopting research-based practices for teaching reading, writing, and math.

The Flagler College team is planning a learning-community program aimed at "cultivating deep learning" and increasing the "sense of connectedness that first-year students feel toward their college, their peers and their faculty." Texas A&M International's team writes that the intent of their proposed learning-community program is "to make learning relevant so that students see the purpose in their study. We want students to experience interdisciplinary connections so they can bring multiple perspectives to problem solving and improve their critical thinking skills. We trust that if this occurs, students will be more motivated to study and pursue their dreams."

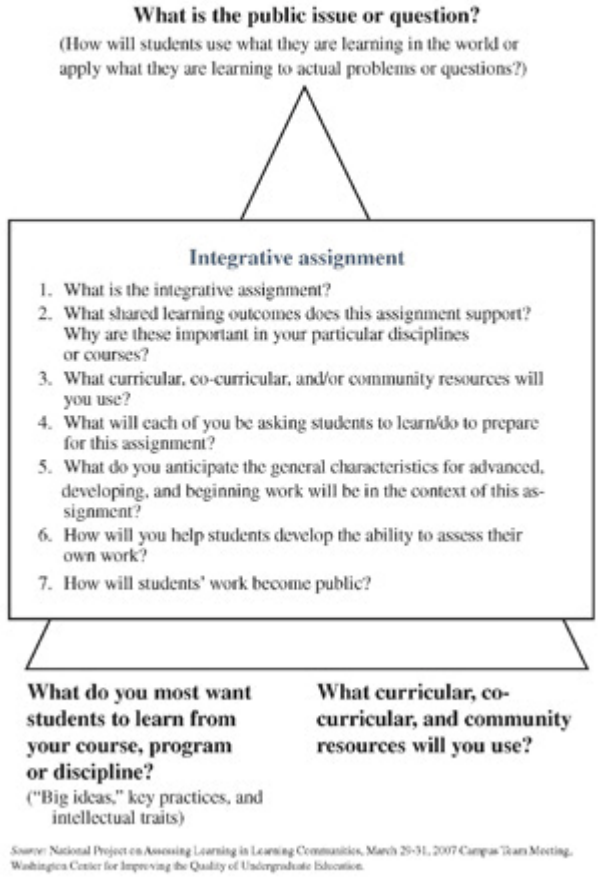
## How Can the Washington Center Help Campuses Focus on Learning?

### *The heuristic*

Just as we note a shift in campus teams' approaches to learning communities, so too has our own approach shifted. In 2001, we first began to advocate that teams use a heuristic that we developed to design integrative assignments, which has gradually become a core practice at the summer institute.

The Designing Integrative and Purposeful Assignments heuristic (see Figure 1) is about assignments—both as invitations to learn and as evidence of learning. It suggests three steps in designing learning experiences for students.

**FIGURE 1. DESIGNING INTEGRATIVE AND PURPOSEFUL ASSIGNMENTS**




*Source:* National Project on Assessing Learning in Learning Communities, March 29-31, 2007 Campus Team Meeting, Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education.

Although the end product will be a jointly designed assignment, the first step is an individual one. We typically begin by posing this question to individual faculty members: What do you want students to knowand be able to do, in the context of the course you are contributing to the learning community? All participants generate a succession of post-it notes on the big ideas, abilities, habits of mind, and attitudes they want students to acquire; this ensures that everyone participating has the opportunity to describe the learning that matters most from their point of view. Then, with individual stacks of post-it notes in hand, teams compare what they have written with the aim of finding common ground.

The next step, making a public issue the subject of learning-community inquiry, emphasizes using knowledge in the world. The intent is to engage students in substantive work, which includes learning how to integrate knowledge from different disciplines and fields of study, multiple perspectives, and conflicting interests. As students' understanding of an issue evolves, they also practice the kinds of learning identified in the first step. Skills are contextualized, as are habits of mind and attitudes. Students who are new to academic work learn to do research, theorize, read, write, reason quantitatively, and listen and speak respectfully—all skills essential to collaborative learning.

The third step emphasizes the resources that learning communities have to draw on to enrich student learning. Often they build in attendance at campus lecture series or book festivals. They may also draw on community resources, creating opportunities to connect classroom learning with out-of-class experiences.

Workshops then yield suggestive examples for integrative assignments. For instance, a faculty team at American River College used the question, "Can students, faculty, and staff eat a 'heart-healthy' diet on campus?" to foster both reading skills and knowledge of anatomy and physiology. The assignment required students to learn about the structure and function of the heart, a "heart-healthy" diet, and the consequences of a poor diet on the heart, along with how to read charts and graphs and to craft questions. Resources included the RDA's food guide pyramid; American Heart Association journal articles; and campus resources such as the health center, food services, and the library.

Faculty report that using the heuristic in a workshop setting allows them to collaborate more effectively; the social negotiations attendant with team-teaching are simplified by the focus on designing an assignment. Moreover, the steps in the heuristic—identifying important learning outcomes, connecting them with a public issue, and drawing on campus resources—ground faculty work in good pedagogical practices. More frequently than we might expect, faculty also report that they value the experience of actually drafting assignments in advance, leaving time for revision and clarification.

The heuristic has been adapted to serve campus needs in more specific ways as well. The first step lends itself to conversations about the ideas and practices students struggle to understand in specific courses, including mathematics. Houston Community College, for example, is piloting a series of learning communities linking developmental math and college-success courses. To plan the integrative assignments, the math faculty listed the handful of topics students most need to understand in order to succeed in subsequent math courses. The college-success teachers did the same, and then teams used the heuristic to design integrative assignments that would lead to important outcomes.

Experienced campus teams also use the heuristic to articulate what exactly students are being asked to integrate. Campuses participating in the Washington Center's National Project on Assessing Learning in Learning Communities discovered the need to be more explicit in assignment design when they used a protocol adapted from Veronica Boix-Mansilla's work on interdisciplinarity to review student work together. In spite of the strong belief that learning communities were promoting integrative work, these examinations of students' work raised questions about whether we have sufficient evidence to support these claims and led to conversations about what grounding in a discipline or field of study looks like. Without such grounding, there is little interdisciplinary leveraging—places where insights from more than one field are brought together to reveal new understandings. This line of inquiry led teams back to the first step of the protocol—what we want students to learn in our courses and what this learning will look like.

For instance, Lynn Dunlap and Larry Sult from Skagit Valley College used the heuristic to revise a popular assignment for a learning community called Grand Illusion that combined political science and film studies. Student panels discussed one film in front of the class, which assessed their performance. In a second iteration of this fishbowl assignment, the rubric given to students to assess the panels had changed—"strength of analysis" carried more weight than "effectiveness of presentation," and students were expected to use specific concepts and techniques from political science and film studies in their discussion of the films. With the revised rubric more focused on disciplinary grounding and on the value of interdisciplinary leveraging, students were able to discuss the film Osama using ideas from Hobbes and Machiavelli to understand loyalty to the Taliban while rejecting that thinking for themselves.

Not only do we introduce the heuristic at the summer institutes, but we have also substantively revised the assignments teams work on there. By 2006, we were asking them to focus on students' experiences of learning and to incorporate plans for using the heuristic in faculty development workshops once they returned home.

***Using research to develop learning-community programs***

In 2007, we developed a focused pedagogical plan informed by Catherine Engstrom and Vincent Tinto's 2007 report, *Pathways to Student Success: The Impact of Learning Communities on the Success of Academically Under-Prepared College Students*, which usefully describes what learning-community programs do and don't do. For example, they report that students typically don't see their academic counselors after their learning communities end; consequently, we invite teams to develop a plan that helps ensure that students will do this.

Beginning in 2007, we also began asking teams to reflect on the essential learning outcomes and principles of excellence from *College Learning for the New Global Century* as a way to think through the kind of learning they want students to gain in their programs. We are revising the pedagogical plan once again in 2008 to incorporate the recommendations from the NSSE 2007 report. We will encourage teams to explicitly embed other highly effective practices in their programs—for example, making the learning community writing-intensive or including community-based learning.

We are mindful that research on effective learning communities is not conclusive. In its March 2008 report on the Opening Doors project at Kingsborough Community College, MDRC researchers remind us that while their study is a "strong test of the structural features of a learning-community program (linked courses, blocked scheduling, etc.)," the variations in class size and content and the degree of integration among courses means that the study may not fully test the impacts of the curricula. Like all educational initiatives, learning communities are complex and variable phenomena. Nonetheless, evolving research and institutional practices are creating the necessary conditions for them to serve as intervention strategies supporting the learning of all students.

Fewer faculty than we expected are knowledgeable about how people learn best and what this suggests for teaching practice. But faculty can hardly be faulted for the problems inherent in a system where not enough value is assigned to the intellectual work of teaching and where too many enrichment programs are underfunded. The lack of resources for faculty development undermines learning in every classroom circumstance, not only in learning communities.

The best materials we know of for high-quality faculty learning can be found in the research reports on student engagement and success previously cited. For instance, all the benchmarks of effective educational practice in the NSSE—including the level of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, and student-faculty interaction—are presented in these reports and publications with brief snapshots that summarize related research. The snapshots are backed by accessible landmark studies on teaching and learning, and these studies are illustrated by accounts of noteworthy practices on campuses.

We invite colleagues to create a faculty-development program that is a learning community for faculty. The core strategy is powerful: Notice what needs work, pay attention to research, try out new ways of working in the company of supportive peers, share insights, refine, and revise. If this approach to faculty development is tied to questions raised by using the heuristic, developing a pedagogical plan, and looking at student work, it will surely have an impact, not just on learning communities but on the pursuit of our collective aim: a high-quality education for every student.

## Resources

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http://www.changemag.org/Archives/Back Issues/July-August 2008/full-new-era.html

# CONVERSATION TOPICS Learning Communities Today_2013

Learning Communities have been the hallmark of collaboration on many campuses for the last century, but often times Learning Community faculty and practitioners rarely have an opportunity to share their challenges and best practices with other practitioners across campuses. This is where University of North Carolina at Greensboro and Western Carolina University joined together: two campuses miles apart working on a common goal - Learning Communities. The 2013 Lilly Conference on College / University Teaching at Greensboro offers Learning Communities a unique partnership - an opportunity for us to come together and share what is happening on our campuses across the state and across the country.

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## And so it begins……

***Following is a summarized list of topics submitted with your registrations:***

**Assessment & Evaluation**

- Assessment of LC programs
- LC student retention after the first year.
- Recruitment and retention

**Best Practice and Methods**

- New teaching ideas incorporating Bloom's Taxonomy.
- Dee Fink's Taxonomy/Active Learning
- Faculty /Student engagement
- High impact practices/programming
- Integrative Assignments
- Academic Support
- Use of LC alumni as TA's to help with ongoing LC classes
- Practices to make advising more vibrant and linked to students' lives.
- Supplemental experiences: professional networking, career exploration, community bonding.
- Presentations that instructors would like to have from Career Services in their class
- How to maximize high impact experiences for LC students in a period of diminishing resources w/o negatively impacting SO, JR, & SRs

**Collaboration and Community**

- Follow up for LC students beyond their initial experience
- Finding the sweet spot between including "cool" courses for LCs,
- Finding ways to build community in a sequential model LC.
- How do we best create a "community" instead of 'a learning program with many cliques/groups'?
- Alternative ways for engaging special populations and creating a sense of community among individuals from different economic and social backgrounds.
- Mentorships between upper class and underclass students
- Methods of collaboration across disciplines
- Strengthening the link between housing and academic department/faculty partnerships.
- Building student rapport

**Logistics and Organization**

- Organization and communication channels among students across disciplines,
- Tracking and advising for students.
- Marketing
- Staffing and funding options
- How to scale up the LC offered...we are currently shifting more towards Integrative Assignments on campus and I feel LC are being left on the back burner.
- Admissions, registration and recruitment for 2-year schools (who don't offer housing).
- Helping students make degree progress, and balancing overall course enrollment university wide.
- The future of learning communities within North Carolina

**Models and Practitioner Roles**

- Living-Learning Community models (and new ideas) from other institutions,
- Roles of various members of living-learning communities,
- Learning more about how other academic-based LCs structure and organize themselves.
- In general, learning about LC practices.
- How I can best support LC efforts as a faculty developer. So topics are pretty broad for me - best practices, lessons learned, training needs, etc.
- Planning growth for the LC. Expanding LC size and course offerings for freshmen; developing courses/activities for sophomores; potential for expanding to include juniors /seniors. Is this feasible, in the best interest of the participants (will it still seem special if it is not just for FY?)

**Recruitment**

Students:

- Recruitment processes,
- Engaging and Recruiting Students
- Increasing population diversity (male students, etc.)
- Parent buy-in

Faculty/Staff

- Recruiting faculty participation ; buy into interdisciplinary teaching;
- How faculty would benefit from being an active participant.
- How to grow the initial set of faculty early-adopters, so that we don't burn out the eager

**Other**

TOPIC:

| CUES | NOTES |
| --- | --- |
| | |

Summary

TOPIC:

| CUES | NOTES |
| --- | --- |
| | |

Summary

***What is a Learning Community?***

"...those initiatives that involve an intentional restructuring of the curriculum to foster intellectual and social connections.." [C. Engstrom in: Hurd & Stein. (2004). p. 59]

TOPIC: **Reasons to establish a Learning Community**

| **CUES** | **NOTES** |
|---|---|
| ▪ Promote intellectual communication between faculty and students<br>▪ Make connections across courses<br>▪ Bridge students' academic and social worlds<br>▪ Increase retention<br>▪ Enhance learning and GPA<br>▪ Enrich residential life for staff<br>▪ Give faculty new perspectives<br>▪ Promote greater interaction and its attendant benefits<br>▪ _<br>▪ _<br>▪ _<br>▪ _ | |

**SUMMARY**

TOPIC: Building Networks to "*learn better together*"

| CUES | NOTES |
| --- | --- |
| ▪ Listserv<br>▪ Annual meetings<br>▪ e-Journal<br>▪ State or regional consortium<br>▪ Sustaining momentum<br>▪ Building resources<br>▪ Professional development<br>▪ Scholarship<br>▪ -<br>▪ _<br>▪ _<br>▪ | |

Summary