Learning Communities
What is A Learning Community?

- “co-registration or block scheduling that enables students to take courses together.”
- Any curricular structures that link together several existing courses for deeper understanding and integration.
- Interaction with one another and their faculty as fellow participants in the learning enterprise.
Common Models

- paired or clustered courses;
- cohorts in large courses;
- team-taught programs;
- residence-based programs
Shared Basic Characteristics

- Organizing students and faculty into smaller groups,
  - Encouraging integration of the curriculum,
- Helping students establish academic and social support networks,
- Providing a setting for students to be socialized to the expectations of college,
  - Bringing faculty together in more meaningful ways,
- Focusing faculty and students on learning outcomes,
- Providing a setting for community-based delivery of academic support programs,
- Offering a critical lens for examining the first-year experience.
USM Examples of LC’s, Special Interests

- EYE
- RSP
- Honors
- TRIO
- FYI
- Community of Arts
- (All differing levels of academic/social integration)
Examples From Best Practices

Aspirational Peer Institutions
- College of William & Mary
- Dartmouth College
- Davidson College
- Miami (OH) University
- University of Richmond

National Institutions
- George Mason University
- University of Michigan
- University of New Mexico
- University of Oregon
- Washington State University

What is a Living-Learning Community?

- A specialized residential community that has a direct connection with a specific academic program.
- A very strong partnership formed between the academic unit and residential life staff in an effort to create a seamless learning experience for residential students.
- Facilities, programs and services provided in the residence hall which enhances the students in and out of class experience, and in turn, enhances overall learning. (Baylor University)
What is the difference between…

Living-Learning Communities (LLCs) vs.

- Freshmen Interest Groups (FIGs)
- Learning Communities (LCs)
- Special Interest Housing (SIH)
- Residential Colleges (RCs)
Why Living-Learning?

Some sought after outcomes of LLCs

• Increased retention
• Improved grades of participants
• Recruitment
• More motivated learners
• Improved graduation rates
• Rise in self esteem of students
• Improved quality of applying students
• Tuition revenues increase
• Greater social & academic integration/connection
LC’s and Retention

- Relationship between “the degree of one’s social and intellectual integration into the academic and social communities of the college” and the likelihood of staying or leaving the college.

- LC’s are model to increase connection to institution and integrate social & academic

- (Tinto, 1994)
Statistics

- 48% of LLCs have 50 or fewer students
- 66% of LLC students live in a reserved portion of a residence hall, with other non-LLC students
- 31% of LLCs are in residence halls in prime location on campus
- 54% are selective
- 31% are funded solely by Student Affairs unit, 14% solely by Academic Affairs unit, 39% a mix of both
- 68% directly report to Residence Life/Housing unit (Inkelas, 2004)
Surprising Statistics

- 73% of LLCs offer no courses for credit
- 78% offer no special sections of large introductory courses
- 51% have 1-5 faculty members with direct roles in LLCs
- 33% have no faculty involvement
- 25% offer academic advising
- 50% facilitate study groups
- 50% of LLCs have *no* required co-curricular activities
Significant Student Outcomes

• Smooth transition to college
• Critical thinking abilities
• Commitment to civic engagement
• Low levels of binge drinking

(Inkelas, 2004)
More Outcomes From Research

- Seattle Central Community College.
  (longitudinal student records, student surveys, and interviews),
- Found that students in LC’s:
- had better grades, more likely to remain in college, persisted to 2nd yr. at higher rate than non-LC’s, more involved with their peers both inside and outside the classroom.
Three-year National Learning Communities Dissemination Project involved 19 institutions, including 7 community colleges. The common lessons:

- Better grades for LC cohort students than for those in respective stand-alone course comparison groups;
- LC students at community colleges had significantly higher rates of retention than did stand-alone counterparts;
- Student survey data said LC college experience inherently better than in stand-alone courses.
LC Student Comments

“This is our family”; “I feel supported”; I can get the academic help I need”; “The classes in the residence are smaller and more personalized than the other classes I take on campus”; “I have the confidence to speak in the classes offered in residence”; and “I used to go home every weekend to be with my family, but now I sometimes stay on the weekend to be with my new college family.”
LC Faculty Comments

- Faculty speak positively & enthusiastically about teaching in learning communities,
- transforms teaching experience from typically isolated and individualistic into a collaborative and empowering one
- new perspective on their discipline and a new window on pedagogy
Non-Significant Findings

- Growth in cognitive complexity, liberal learning, personal philosophy
- Higher academic self-confidence
- Appreciation for racial/ethnic diversity

(Inkelas, 2004)
An LLC wish list:

- Classroom/performance space in the hall
- Faculty office & living space in hall
- Specifically trained RAs
- A programming model designed around the community
- Unlimited budget
- Faculty involvement/collaboration
- Academic credited courses
- Student interest/ involvement
- Selective Application process
- Short term travel experience
- Clear mission and vision
- Study group space
Continued List

- Advisory Committee
- An ownership and balanced work load between academic and student affairs
- Ongoing assessment (internal and external review)
- Professional publicity and recruitment
- Collaboration with admissions for first year programs
- Collaboration with the department for university development
- Upper administrative support
- Local community support
- Utilize existing student services
- Mentorships with upper-class students and/or faculty (active and retired)
Theme-Based Typology
14 Primary Categories
(Inkelas, 2004)

- Civic/Social Leadership
- Cultural
- Disciplinary
- Fine & Creative Arts
- General Academic
- Honors
- Multi-Disciplinary
- Outdoor Recreation
- Research
- Residential College
- Transition
- Upper-Division
- Wellness/Healthy Living
- Women’s
Community of Arts
Our Mission

- The Community of Arts (COA) is a Living Learning Community with a mission to create an environment for students to integrate their artistic studies and their residential experiences. COA will provide a venue for students, faculty and staff to interact outside of the classroom. COA encourages student, faculty and staff programs that foster innovative and interdisciplinary learning experiences that bring the intellectual life of the University in close alliance with the student’s lives outside of the classroom.

- **Goals:**
  - Provide students with an opportunity to take responsibility for part of their education.
  - Expose students to the performing and creative arts.
  - Connect students with faculty and staff.
  - Provide a facility that supports students’ educational, social and recreational needs.
Community of Arts

The Community of Arts (COA) is a living learning community with a mission to create an environment for students to integrate their artistic studies and their residential experiences. COA provides a venue for students, faculty and staff to interact outside of the classroom. COA encourages student, faculty and staff programs that foster innovative and interdisciplinary learning experiences that bring the intellectual life of the University in close alliance with the student’s lives outside of the classroom.

Click here to join the Community of Arts listserve
Please put me in the subject line of your e-mail
Click on a month to checkout what’s going on in the Community of Arts!

November Events

December Events