

Learning Communities

Faculty Workshop

February 5, 2008

Sponsored by the **BEAMS** Team

Building **E**ngagement and **A**ttainment of **M**inority
Students



What is a Learning Community?

In higher education, curricular **learning communities are classes that are linked or clustered during an academic term**, often around an interdisciplinary theme, and enroll a common cohort of students.

The three general types of learning community structures are as follows:

- ❑ **Student Cohorts/Integrative Seminar**
Learning communities can be structured as programs in which a small cohort of students enrolls in larger classes that faculty do not coordinate. In this instance, intellectual connections and community-building often take place in an additional integrative seminar.
- ❑ **Linked Courses/Course Clusters**
Learning communities may involve two or more classes linked thematically or by content which a cohort of students takes together. In this instance, the faculty do plan the program collaboratively.
- ❑ **Coordinated Study**
Learning communities may involve coursework that faculty members team teach. The course work is embedded in an integrated program of study.



What is a Living- Learning Community?

Residential learning communities assign students who are enrolled in learning communities to the same residence halls and, in some instances, are mentored by upperclass peers who also reside in the same location.

Also known as cluster colleges, residential colleges and living/learning communities.



Why Have Learning Communities?

- Learning communities have been shown to increase student retention and academic achievement, increase student involvement and motivation, improve students time to degree completion, and enhance student intellectual development.
- Students involved in learning communities become more intellectually mature and responsible for their own learning and develop the capacity to care about the learning of their peers.
- Faculty members involved in learning communities that facilitate cross-faculty collaboration are expanding their repertoire of teaching approaches, continually revising their course content, and acquiring new scholarly interests. Learning community faculty members are also building mentoring relationships with each other and are more frequently engaging with beginning students and general education offerings.
- Learning Communities offer more coherent opportunities for the teaching of literacy skills, such as reading, writing, and speaking, and more coherent pathways for students to engage in the general education curriculum. They also offer a robust way to address interdisciplinary ideas and offer a more coordinated platform for study in the major.
- Learning community programs also address a variety of societal issues such as the increasing fragmentation of information and student alienation toward participation and engagement. With an emphasis on interpersonal dialogue, collaboration, and experiential learning within the context of diversity, this allow students to relate their college-level learning to larger personal and global questions.



How are Learning Communities taught?

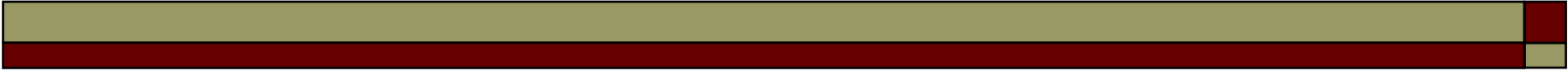
Learning communities foster learning to learn as a social act. Strategies for building active learning in the classroom include:

- ❑ **Service learning**
- ❑ **Collaborative and cooperative learning**
- ❑ **Peer teaching**
- ❑ **Discussion groups and seminars**
- ❑ **Experiential learning**
- ❑ **Labs and field trips**
- ❑ **Problem-based learning**
- ❑ **Demonstrations**
- ❑ **Writing and speaking across-the-curriculum**
- ❑ **Ongoing reflection**
- ❑ **Metacognitive activities**
- ❑ **Self-evaluation**



Connect Learning Communities to the Quality Enhancement Plan

WRITING. REALIZED.
Developing Writing Literacies in a Technological Age



How should we assess Learning Communities?

Assessment is the gathering of information concerning the functioning of students, staff, and institutions of higher education. The information may or may not be in numerical form, but the basic motive for gathering it is to improve the functioning of the institution and its people.

Learning communities have been the subject of intensive assessment using a variety of formative and summative approaches and both qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

At the student level, assessments examine:

- learning
- satisfaction
- engagement
- retention
- time to degree
- involvement in campus and community activities

Pedagogical approaches within learning communities have been assessed, as have faculty satisfaction, learning, and other professional development factors.



Assessment continued

- **Formative assessment** is the gathering of data that occurs during an academic term with the express purpose of improving practice at the time of program or instructional delivery or student engagement in a learning activity.
- **Summative assessment** is data gathering post-program or instructional delivery or student learning episode with the purpose of improving future practice.

(Henscheid, 2003)



Resource

<http://www.evergreen.edu/washcenter/lcfaq.htm>



Proposals must contain

1. Details of the thematic design which should include:

- Learning Community Structure
- Target student participants
- Target faculty participants
- Indication of residential or nonresidential learning community

2. Learning Outcomes. Examples include:

- Enhancement of Core Communication and Quantitative skills
- Development of Critical Thinking skills
- Integration and Application of Knowledge
- Intellectual Engagement
- Values and Ethics

3. Assessment methods.

4. Detailed Budget Summary.

5. Campus wide collaboration with one or more auxiliary office(s) such as Student Affairs, Admissions, Registrar and/or academic advisors.

Budget: Up to \$6500; maximum of \$3500 for personnel.

Proposal Deadline: March 14, 2008



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