DESIGNING EFFECTIVE LIVING-LEARNING COMMUNITIES

After this webcast, you will know how to create more engaging living-learning communities on your campus.
DESIGNING EFFECTIVE LIVING-LEARNING COMMUNITIES

NSLLP overview → promising practices → challenges and recommendation

NSLLP OVERVIEW
DESIGNING EFFECTIVE LIVING-LEARNING COMMUNITIES

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Funding Sources

NSF
acuho-i
NASPA
ACPA

ACADEMIC IMPRESSIONS 5

ACADEMIC IMPRESSIONS 6
Designing Effective Living-Learning Communities

Survey Timeline

**2003 Pilot Study**
- Four campuses
- 5,437 students
- Tested reliability & validity of survey instrument and data collection methods

**2004 NSLLP**
- 34 institutions
- 23,910 students
- 297 L/L programs
- T1 data collection
- Surveyed students & programs

**2007 NSLLP**
- 46 institutions
- T2 follow-up (n=1,509)
- New baseline (n=22,258)
- 617 L/L programs
- 4 campus site visits in 2008

Questions on Student Surveys

(Based on Astin I-E-O framework)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inputs</th>
<th>Environments</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demographics</td>
<td>Academic major</td>
<td>Transition to college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS achievement</td>
<td>Peer interactions</td>
<td>Perceptions of intellectual abilities and growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-tests of outcomes</td>
<td>Faculty interactions</td>
<td>Self-confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Co-curricular involvement</td>
<td>Appreciation of diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Study group interactions</td>
<td>Sense of civic engagement</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Alcohol-related experiences</td>
<td>Alcohol use and behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use of residence hall resources</td>
<td>Persistence/drop-out risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perceptions of residence hall climate</td>
<td>College GPA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diverse interactions</td>
<td>Overall satisfaction and sense of belonging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>STEM related questions</td>
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Questions on L/L Program Survey

- General information (e.g., size, goals & objectives)
- Reporting structure
- Budget/fiscal resources
- Academic coursework
- Faculty and staff roles
- Activities and resources
- Additional STEM-related questions

Themes of programs*

- Civic & Social Leadership (4 types)
- Disciplinary (12 types)
- Fine & Creative Arts (2 types)
- General Academic
- Honors
- Cultural (3 types)
- Leisure (2 types)
- Political Interest
- Residential College
- Research
- ROTC
- Transition (2 types)
- Umbrella
- Upper Division
- Wellness/Health
- Women’s (2 types)

* Based on content analysis of 2007 NSLLP data
### L/L profile

#### Basic characteristics of programs

#### Size

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Median size of program</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modal size of program</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Programs with over 1,000 students</td>
<td>11</td>
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#### Cost

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Expense</th>
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<tr>
<td>Average cost of program</td>
<td>$21,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mean cost of program</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programs with no budget</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs with budgets under $1,000</td>
<td>25%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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L/L profile
Basic characteristics of programs

Configuration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Percentage of Programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programs housed within one discrete portion of residence hall</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encompass entire residence hall</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest were unique arrangements</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Oversight

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oversight</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residence Life/Housing</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Departments/Academic Affairs only</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination SA/AA</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Arrangements</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
L/L profile

Basic characteristics of programs

Professional affiliation of director

- Residence Life: 43%
- Academic Department: 8%
- Combination: 15%
- Multi-person Board: 13%
- Other: 21%

Top 5 goals of programs*

1. Experiencing a smooth academic transition to college (55%)
2. Feeling a sense of belonging to the institution (54%)
3. Demonstrating openness to views different than one’s own (52%)
4. Learning about others different than one’s self (50%)
5. Experiencing a smooth social transition to college (50%)

* Percentage of L/L programs indicating goal as “very important”
L/L profile

Academic coursework

- 52% of L/L programs in NSLLP did not include any form of academic coursework
  - 28% provided only one course
  - Outlier: 1 program offered more than 20 courses

- Of forms of coursework offered, most popular were:
  - Specially designed courses for L/L program (11%)
  - Credit-bearing courses co-listed by an academic dept (9%)

Faculty involvement

- 23% had no faculty involvement at all
- 64% included only 1-3 faculty members

- Most common forms of faculty involvement were:
  - Teaching
  - Conducting workshops
  - Mentorship
  - Academic advising
**L/L profile**

**Student affairs staff involvement**

- 85% utilized student affairs staff in some way

- Most common forms of staff involvement were:
  - Administrative tasks
  - Living in community
  - Attending social events
  - Supervising RAs

**Co-curricular activities offered**

**Required:**

- Orientation: 23%
- Group projects: 14%
- Team building: 12%

**Optional:**

- Cultural outings: 75%
- Multicultural programs: 77%
- Study groups: 75%
2008 campus case studies

- Used NSLLP survey data to identify living-learning best practices

- Selected four campuses for case study
  - Mid-sized public urban university in Mid-Atlantic
  - Mid-sized public rural university in Midwest
  - Large public university in mid-sized city in Southeast
  - Mid-sized public rural university in Southeast

Case study key findings

- Academic/Student Affairs partnerships integral to effective living-learning programs, but partnerships can take different forms

- Peer interaction/bonding is the most powerful influence on students in living-learning programs, but there can be negative side-effects as well

- Effective living-learning programs are not necessarily ones with lots of “bells & whistles” -- what is more important is the level of integration across the activities within the program
PROMISING PRACTICES
(BASED ON NSLLP FINDINGS)

L/L elements examined

- # participants?
- Selection?
- Faculty?
- Staff?
- What?
- How Often?
- Institution?
- Budgets and costs?
- Reporting?
- Goals?
- Courses?
- Required and optional activities?
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L/L promising practices

Strongest LLPs most likely to:

- Be based on Student Affairs/Academic Affairs partnerships:
  - Well-defined roles for faculty and student affairs staff
  - Blend of funding sources
  - However, there is more than one type of partnership that can be successful

- Have a strong academic focus:
  - Includes credit-bearing courses
  - Facilitates study groups
  - Co-curricular activities also academically focused and integrated with other academics (service learning, workshops, etc.)
  - Students can access faculty easily with course-related questions
Strongest LLPs most likely to:

- Be intentional *in order to be* serendipitous
  - Faculty involved with formal *AND* spontaneous/informal aspects of programming
  - Student affairs staff handle administrative tasks *AND* are present in the halls
  - Programs should capitalize on its community setting to create intimate spaces for learning wherever and whenever it occurs

Recommendation #1

*Develop integrated Student Affairs & Academic Affairs partnerships*
Recommendation #1
How to build successful partnerships

- Start with shared program goals, or problems that can be solved together (retention, recruitment, boosting a “niche” program, etc.)
  - Focus on real problems, not theoretical opportunities
  - Identify and support champions
  - Initiate the conversation
  - Expect and manage conflict
  - Expect ups and downs, and a “retreat into status quo”
  - Evaluate the outcomes

Recommendation #1
Ideas for collaboration

- Find shared goals and problems that can be turned into learning objectives

- Involve residence life and academic departments or individual faculty “champions”

- Share budget responsibilities between housing and academic departments or colleges

- Share administrative and program oversight
**Recommendation #1:**

**Practitioner perspective**

- Fostering positive partnerships with faculty
  - Being aware of campus developments and assessing for new opportunities
  - Establishing and communicating a comprehensive plan to involve faculty by supporting their areas of interest and research
  - Developing partnership agreements and expectations documents
  - Forming an LLC Council

Kathy Hobgood  
Director of Residential Life  
Clemson University

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**Recommendation #2**

*Identify clear learning objectives with a strong emphasis on academic components*
Recommendation #2: What is a learning objective?

- How does one define a learning objective?
  - *Ask yourself:* What do I hope students will be like or be able to do after having participated in my program? Think about what you’d like students to *know*, be able to *do*, and *value*
  - *Answer the question:* “As a result of participation in my program, students will...”

Possible learning objectives for L/L programs

- *To review:* top 5 goals of L/L programs in the NSLLP
  - Experience a smooth academic transition to college (55%)
  - Feel a sense of belonging to the institution (54%)
  - Demonstrate openness to views different than one’s own (52%)
  - Learn about others different than one’s self (50%)
  - Experience a smooth social transition to college (50%)
Possible learning objectives for L/L programs

Other possibilities:

- Develop stronger capacities in critical thinking
- Become more civically engaged with one’s community
- Be more efficacious about STEM careers
- Demonstrate deeper knowledge about [insert discipline]
- Become active learners, more engaged in their own education

Identifying your program’s goals & objectives

Try:

- Program’s mission statement
- Institution’s mission statement
- Accreditation reviews (or any external review) *
- Comparable units’ missions/objectives

... AND – Consider your audience

* Note: this could be strategically wise!
Recommendation #2: Moving from learning objectives to L/L program components

- Must include an academic component (e.g., courses, advising)
- Should also include academically oriented co-curricular activities
- However, don’t be afraid to capitalize on hot topics and serendipity
- The key: programming should remain consistent with learning objectives

Practice #2: Practitioner perspective

- Challenges of learning outcomes in the residence hall

Andrew Beckett
Assistant Dean of First Year Programs, University College
University of Iowa
Recommendation #3:

Be intentional in order to be serendipitous

Think intentionality

- What would your L/L Community look like if it were fully realized, if it were working perfectly?
- How would it be distinct from other residence halls?
- What would the day-to-day interactions look like as well as the formal programs (academic and social)?
- How would the students distinguish themselves outside of the residence hall?

“Walk the Talk”
Recommendation #3: Capitalize on the community setting

- We learn by doing and by teaching others
- Repetition is crucial; learning is everywhere
- Emotions have to be engaged; students must find meaning in their learning in order for it to “stick”

“Walk the Talk”

- Ideas regarding supervision
- Ideas related to physical spaces
- Ideas concerning roles of graduate students
- Ideas for instructors
Recommendation #3: Practitioner perspective

Making it work:
• International Learning Community

Scott Seyforth
Area Coordinator
University of Wisconsin – Madison

International Learning Community

• Opened 2002
• 130 students
• 23% International students
Designing Effective Living-Learning Communities

**Goals**

- Language acquisition
- Cultural exploration/exchange
- Academic support in transition to college
- Social support in transition to college

**Seven Language Houses**

- Spanish
- Arabic
- Japanese
- German
- Scandinavian
- Italian
- Russian
Logistics

- The language department provides a TA (native speaker) who lives-in and coordinates three activities a week to use the language.
- Including:
  - Language Conversation Meals
  - Cultural Activities
  - Tutoring Hours

Everyone takes a for-credit course from a professor in their language department.
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Every other week there is a dinner with students, TA’s, and faculty that includes a keynote speaker and discussion following.

Lots of opportunity for . . .

- learning by doing and repetition
- engaging emotions and finding meaning in the learning
- peer interaction around theme of LC
- formal interactions and informal interactions
- use of graduate students in “bridge” role between students and faculty/staff
- integrating across activities in the program
Challenges include . . .

- High faculty commitment (11 Faculty/year)
- High cost per student (TA’s & Professors)
- High coordination of effort across 8 departments

Putting it all together:
L/L best practices as building blocks

A hierarchy of needs

“ICING”
CO-CURRICULAR ENVIRONMENT
ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT
INFRASTRUCTURE
Designing Effective Living-Learning Communities

A hierarchy of needs
L/L best practices building blocks

- “ICING” Intentional integration
- Study groups
- Career workshops
- Visiting work settings
- K-12 outreach
- Academically supportive climate
- Socially supportive climate
- Courses for credit
- Faculty advising
- Academically supportive climate
- Socially supportive climate
- Academic departments
- Residence Life
- Dedicated residence hall space
- Collaboration
- Funding
- K-12 outreach
- Visiting work settings
- Career workshops
- Intentional integration

Incomplete models
Lacking Academic Affairs partnership

- “ICING” Intentional integration
- Study groups
- Career workshops
- Visiting work settings
- K-12 outreach
- Academically supportive climate
- Socially supportive climate
- Courses for credit
- Faculty advising
- Academically supportive climate
- Socially supportive climate
- Academic departments
- Residence Life
- Dedicated residence hall space
- Collaboration
- Funding
- K-12 outreach
- Visiting work settings
- Career workshops
- Intentional integration
Incomplete models
No/weak co-curricular component

Incomplete models
Lack of intentional integration of activities
QUESTIONS

CHALLENGES & RECOMMENDATIONS
Challenges in living-learning practice

• Academic coursework
  – Challenge in obtaining academic credit for L/L courses
  – Lower student motivation for L/L courses

• Faculty involvement
  – Difficulty in recruiting and retaining faculty involvement
  – Challenging to get faculty to participate in co- or extra-curricular activities
Challenges in living-learning practice

• Academic & student affairs partnerships
  – Cultural divide between Academic and Student Affairs
  – Already “full” plates for Academic and Student Affairs administrators; no time for collaboration

• Community building
  – L/L community suffers from disciplinary problems that prevents moving forward with more ambitious goals
  – L/L community is too close-knit, experiencing “hyper-bonding”
For more information:

• Our website: www.livelearnstudy.net

• Resource list provided with materials
DESIGNING EFFECTIVE LIVING-LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Thank you!

Aaron Brower
University of Wisconsin

Kathy Hobgood
Clemson University

Karen Kurotsuchi Inkelas
University of Virginia

Andrew Beckett
University of Iowa

Scott Seyforth
University of Wisconsin
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