

Atlantic Center for Learning Communities retreat, October 2015



LC101: Developing and Implementing Learning Communities

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Key Aspects of LCs:

- Link or cluster courses and faculty around an interdisciplinary theme
- Enroll a common cohort of students
- Restructure students' time and learning experiences
- Foster explicit intellectual connections between:
 - Students and students
 - Students and faculty
 - Faculty and faculty






Aims of Learning Communities

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- Increase curricular coherence
 - Promote deep learning
 - Connect skill and content areas
 - Build community
 - Revitalize faculty
 - Revitalize the institution
 - Promote diversity
 - Enhance student engagement
 - Enhance student achievement
 - Increase retention



Collaborative learning assumptions

- Learning is an active, constructive process
 - Learning depends on rich contexts
 - Learners are diverse
 - Learning is inherently social
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- Smith, B.L. and MacGregor, J. (1992). What is Collaborative Learning? In Collaborative Learning: A Sourcebook for Higher Education. Goodsell, A., Maher, M., & Tinto, V., Eds. University Park, PA: National Center on Postsecondary Teaching, Learning, and Assessment.




Factors that enhance student learning

- Increased amounts and quality of interaction (Astin)
 - Student-student , student-faculty
 - Study outside of class
- High levels of involvement and engagement (Kuh, NSSE)
 - Academic challenge
 - Active learning
 - Student-faculty interaction
 - Supportive campus environment
 - Enriching educational experiences
- Astin, A. (1993). *What matters in college? Four critical years revisited*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Kuh, G. D. et al., (2005). *Student success in college: Creating conditions that matter*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.



Examples of LC goals and outcomes

- St. Louis University
 - <http://www.slu.edu/x25041.xml>
- Holyoke Community College
 - <http://www.hcc.edu/courses-and-programs/learning-communities>
- Bunker Hill Community College
 - <http://www.bhcc.mass.edu/learning-communities/>
 - The Learning Community **Seminar** is a 3-credit course that will help you make friends, connect with faculty, and learn what it takes to succeed in college.
 - BHCC Learning Community **Clusters** enable you to take two or more courses together and learn and study with the same group of students. . . . You will be more likely to stay in school, maintain a higher GPA, and achieve your goals.



Examples of goals and outcomes, cont.

- Louisiana State University
 - The goals of the Learning Communities Program are to enhance the quality of student learning and to provide faculty with opportunities to collaborate in teaching across the disciplines. Specifically, the objectives of the program are as follows:
 - 1) to promote a deeper understanding of subject matter by examining it from the perspectives of different disciplines;
 - 2) to increase faculty-student and student-student interaction;
 - 3) to increase student responsibility for learning and for helping other students to learn,
 - 4) to create active learning environments and
 - 5) to improve retention rates among students.

What are your resources?

- Possible resources:
 - People – faculty, administrators, staff, students
 - Space/facilities
 - Money
 - Time
 - Programs
 - Other








Create and Foster Faculty Community

- Importance of relationship building
- Intersections of disciplines
- Collaboration and professional development
- Breaking out of institutional boundaries




Faculty recruitment ideas

- Emphasize opportunities:
 - work with a colleague(s) in a different department or discipline
 - work with a different population of students
 - be innovative – new teaching methods, different topics, different texts and assignments/assessments
 - Possible perks – release time, stipend, equipment, visibility
 - TALK to people
 - Get department chairs on board
 - Recruit from across campus, seek diversity and wide representation
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Gather your LC development team

- Look at list of resources, obstacles, and allies to see who should be included. Work with the willing.
- Suggested team/Advisory Board members:
 - Faculty
 - Academic administrator (“champion”)
 - Librarian/Information Literacy
 - Academic advisor
 - Registrar
 - Student affairs administrator
 - Student (if peer mentors/educators are involved)



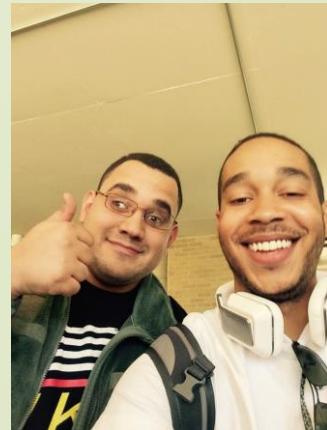


Market LCs to students, parents, and -

- Admissions officers
- Academic advisors
- Student affairs colleagues - orientation, residence life, career services, special programs, etc.
- Communications colleagues - website, brochures, news, Facebook, Twitter, etc.
- Other faculty and admins. – don't keep it a secret

Consider adding a Peer Mentoring Program

- LC Students benefit from having Peer Mentors because
 - Mentors can be a role model to them
 - Mentors are experienced students who are knowledgeable about the campus and the LC program
 - Mentors can organize groups of students to connect to campus activities and services
- Peer Mentors benefit because
 - they continue to develop within an LC environment
 - they develop leadership skills
 - they make a stronger connection to the institution



Mentors in LCs should...

- Be under the supervision of a faculty/staff member
- Have regular contact with their LC students
- Be trained
 - Campus policies
 - Campus services
 - Confidentiality
- Work with students outside the classroom
- Work with students inside the classroom





LCs beyond the first year

- *Intermediate LCs* - a pair of interdisciplinary courses or a team-taught interdisciplinary course
- *Senior LCs* - in the major, combining a capstone course with an intensive practical/internship/field course
 - Wagner College (NY)
 - <http://wagner.edu/academics/undergraduate/fyp/fyp-courses/>
- *Honors LCs*
 - Holyoke Community College (Mass.)
 - <http://www.hcc.edu/courses-and-programs/learning-communities>



Sample LC web pages

- Participating institutions of the Atlantic Center for Learning Communities (ACLC):
 - <http://faculty.wagner.edu/aclc/member-institutions/>
- The University of Washington
 - <http://fyp.washington.edu/figs/>
- Delta College
 - <http://www.delta.edu/learningcommunities.aspx>
- New Century College at George Mason University
 - <http://ncc.gmu.edu/student-info/learning-communities>

LC resources - online

- The Journal of Learning Community Research and Practice
 - <http://washingtoncenter.evergreen.edu/lcrpjournal/>
- Research on LC development and effectiveness
 - <http://www.postsecondaryresearch.org/index.html?Id=News&Info=New+NCPR+Report+on+Learning+Communities>
 - http://www.mdrc.org/project/learning-communities-demonstration#featured_content
- LC bibliography
 - <http://faculty.wagner.edu/aclc/lc-resources/>
- Learning Communities listserv
 - learncom@lists.evergreen.edu