

Enhancing Educational Effectiveness: The Value of Integrative Learning and Learning Communities

Learning Communities: Program Development Workshop



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Agenda for Higher Education

- Increase postsecondary access
- Enhance educational quality
- Ensure student success



21st Century: Turning Point for Higher Education

- Getting students in the front door is only the first step—**we also have to help them reach the graduation stage.**
- Need students to have high quality educational experiences— and be better prepared for 21st century workforce.





LEAP

College Learning *for the* *New Global Century*

A REPORT FROM
THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP COUNCIL FOR

Liberal Education & America's Promise

★ ★

Association of American Colleges and Universities

LEAP



Narrow Learning is Not Enough: The Essential Learning Outcomes



- ★ ***Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical & Natural World***
- ★ ***Intellectual and Practical Skills***
- ★ ***Personal and Social Responsibility***
- ★ ***“Deep” Integrative Learning***



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Deep, Integrative Learning

- **Attend to the underlying meaning of information as well as content**
- **Integrate and synthesize different ideas, sources of information**
- **Discern patterns in evidence or phenomena**
- **Apply knowledge in different situations**
- **View issues from multiple perspectives**

Purposeful Pathways to Transformational Learning

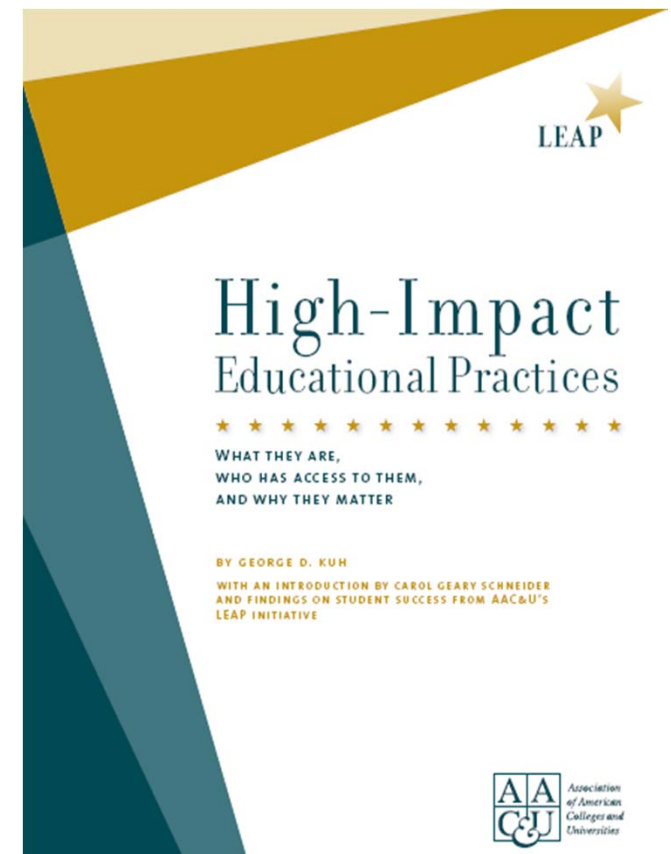
A transformative education repeatedly exposes students to *multiple opportunities* for *intentional* learning through the formal academic curriculum, student life, collaborative curricular programming, community-based, and global experiences.

Learning Reconsidered (2004)



Some Educational Activities are Unusually Effective

“High-impact practices” provide substantial educational benefits to students



[High-Impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access To Them, and Why They Matter (2008) AAC&U]

High Impact Activities



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- ★ **First-Year Seminars and Experiences**
- ★ **Common Intellectual Experiences**
- ★ **Learning Communities**
- ★ **Writing-Intensive Courses**
- ★ **Collaborative Assignments and Projects**
- ★ **Undergraduate Research**
- ★ **Diversity/Global Learning**
- ★ **Service Learning,
Community-Based Learning**
- ★ **Internships**
- ★ **Capstone Courses/**



One High Impact Approach...Learning Communities

- Curricular structures that link together several courses-- or actually restructure the curricular material entirely-- so that students have opportunities for deeper understanding and **integration** of the material they are learning, and more interaction with one another and educators in the learning enterprise.
- The structure encourages integration of learning across courses and involves students with “big questions” that matter beyond the classroom; many LCs explore a common topic and/or common readings through different disciplines. *-- AAC&U definitions*

Basic Definition: Learning Community



A variety of curricular approaches that intentionally link or cluster 2 or more courses, often around an interdisciplinary theme or problem, enroll a common cohort of students. Sometimes involves a residential experience. Involves an intentional restructuring of students' time, credit and learning experiences to build community, enhance learning, and foster connections among students, faculty, and disciplines.

Learning Community Components

Learning communities— newly minted or long established—need to include, at minimum, the following 3 components:

- A **strategically-defined cohort** of students taking courses together which have been identified through a review of institutional data
- **Robust, collaborative partnerships** between academic affairs and student affairs
- Explicitly designed **opportunities to practice integrative and interdisciplinary learning**



Learning Communities at ODU

What is a Learning Community?

At Old Dominion, learning communities are groups of students who connect what they're learning with what they want to do: their majors, career choices, or their hopes for a better world.

Learning Community students take one or more courses together and may live in the same residence hall.

You Will Learn

- how to apply knowledge and skills in new settings.
- how to succeed in a college environment.
- how to develop skills prized by employers.





ODU LCs and Goals



- **Why LCs at ODU?**
- **What is the purpose of LCs at ODU?**
- **What broader institutional goals/concerns, and data are informing their implementation and development?**

Other Possible LC Goals???

- Promote greater **student involvement in learning**
- Provide context for **faculty development** & engage faculty in supportive teaching environment
- **Link first-year experience programs** and freshman seminars to discipline-based courses
- Introduce students to the **academic culture**
- Foster students and teachers **sharing responsibility** for teaching and learning
- Provide **at-risk students** with support network of faculty, peers, and counselors

More Possible LC Goals??

- Help students overcome feelings of isolation common on large campuses
- Introduce accountability into learning (attendance, participation, group work, etc)
- Bring faculty together in more meaningful ways
- Focus faculty and students on learning outcomes
- Site for delivering and examining first year experience programs and outcomes
- Deliver academic support programs in community-based structure

Goals for Faculty & Staff Involvement in Learning Communities

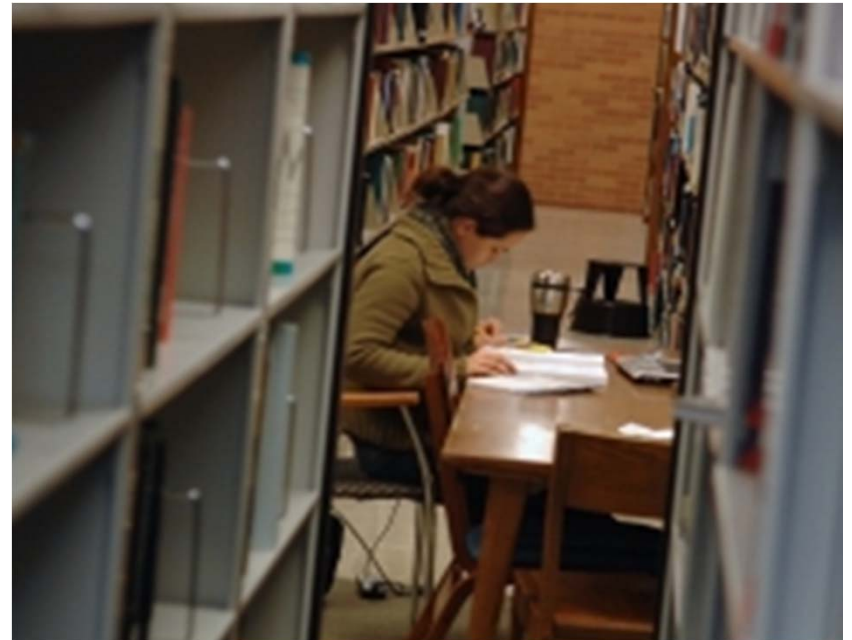
“This is the most exciting educational experience of my long academic career. I don't want to go back to the old ways of teaching, and I hope we can develop more of these wonderful educational experiences for our students” – LC faculty member

What do you hope for your experience?



LCs to Support Student Learning and Success

- Platform for transforming the first college year
- Structure to forge new partnerships and strategies to enhance student success
- Student success begins in the classroom, and LCs provide the contexts for entering students to connect with one another, and with their learning, to support success



Value of Learning Communities

- Strengthens retention & academic achievement
- Increase satisfaction
- Increase rate of course completion
- Increase engagement in educationally productive activities (integrated learning, stu-fac interaction, collaborative learning)
- Benefits to targeted groups (i.e., women in science, underrepresented students)
- Promotes connectedness to discipline, ideas, peers etc.
- Long term contributions to student learning



Source: Learning Community Research & Assessment: What We Know Now. National Learning Communities Project Monograph Series. Washington Center.

Popular LC Features

- Living-learning
- Integrative courses or discussion group
- Required out-of-class activities
- Courses only for LC cohort, or related to major
- Undergraduate peer mentors



Learning Communities: Features that Matter

- Intentional links between courses
- Link to gateway, “weed-out” courses, high DFWs
- Instructional teams
- Peer teaching
- Invest in faculty development
- Active, engaging pedagogies
- Integrative experience – seminar, assignment, activities



Learning communities matter...

- ◆ **Even “modest” structures (co-enrolled, linked) have positive impact on social life, quality of interaction with peers & faculty, and persistence**
- ◆ **More intentional, complex features (integrative, peer advisors, requiring experiences outside of class – community service or community based projects, field trips, social events) make a greater difference to student learning**





Relationship between LC Features and Selected Outcomes

Statistical Model Results	General Education	Understanding Self & Others	Social Life
Exclusive to LC Participants		--	--
Majority of Classes Together			++
Course or Discussion Group Integrates	+++	+++	++
Integrative Assignments Across Courses	+++	++	++
Peer Advisor			++
Out-of-Class Activities	++	+++	+++
Residential			++

Learning Community features linked to greatest learning benefits

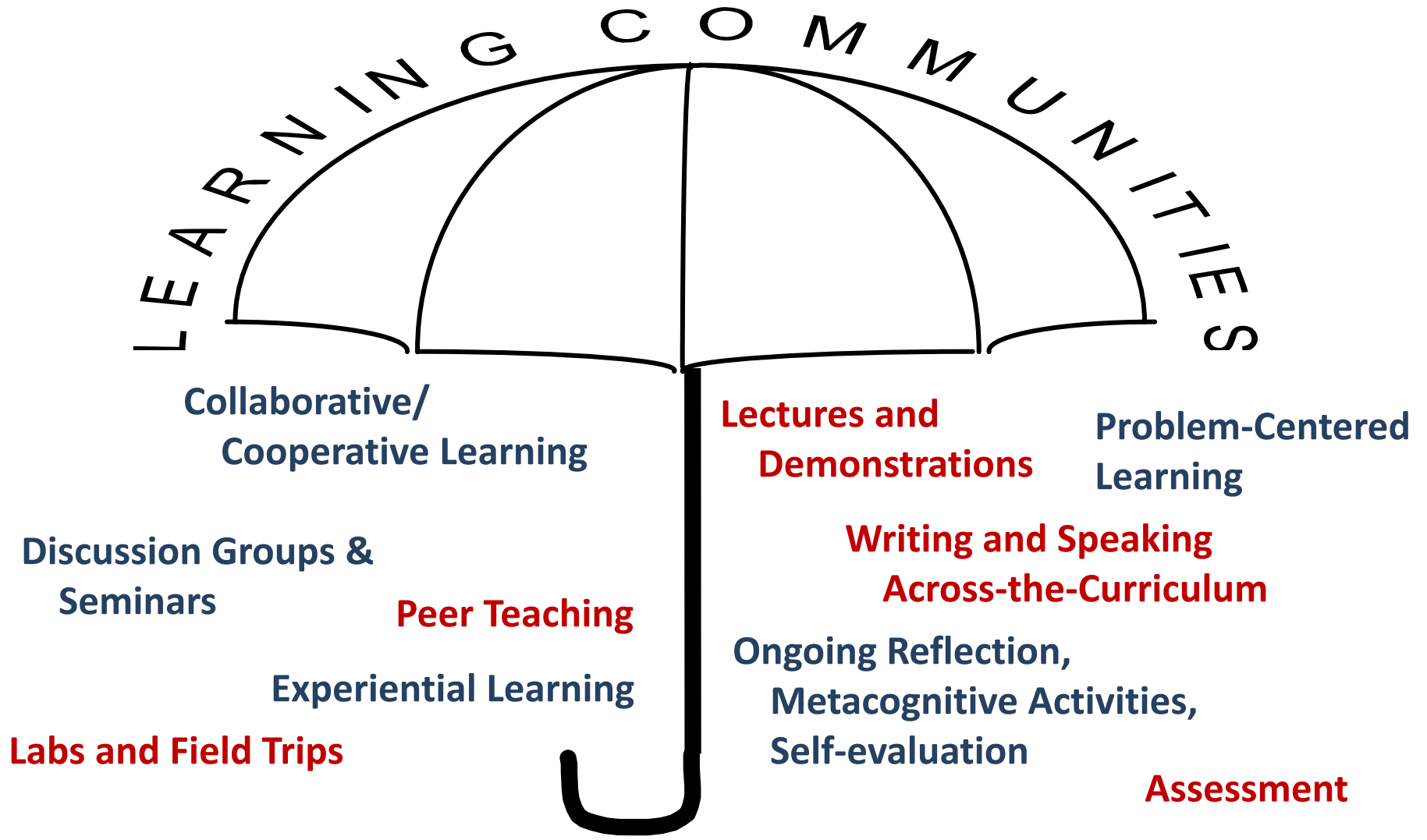
1. Engaging pedagogies
2. Peer teaching, mentors
3. Out-of-classroom activities
4. LC programs that integrate material across courses



Engaging Pedagogies

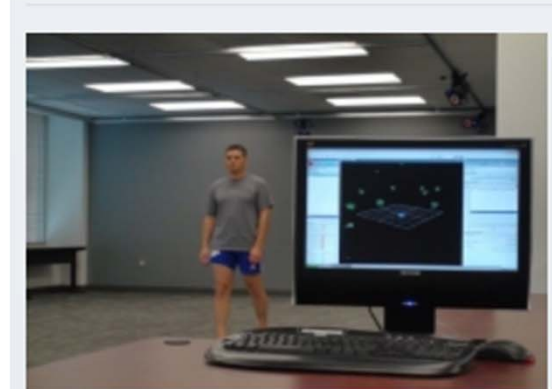
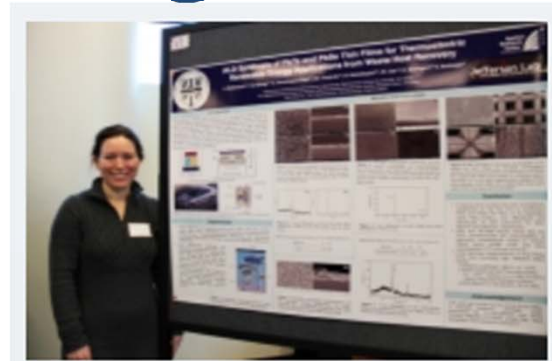


Learning Communities Invite an Array of Pedagogical Approaches



“Learning communities as a means to increase engaged learning”

- Encourage your consideration of high-impact practices for your learning community efforts
 - **Hallmarks of high-impact practices**
 - **Pedagogical high-impact practices**
 - **Incorporating other high-impact activities into learning communities**



The HIP Hallmarks

6 common elements that—*when employed*—make the practices high impact:

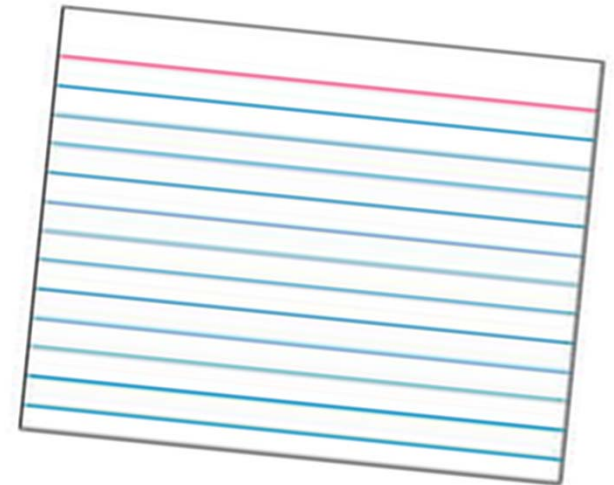
- ✓ **They are effortful**
- ✓ **They help students build substantive relationships**
- ✓ **They help students engage across differences**
- ✓ **They provide students with rich feedback**
- ✓ **They help students apply and test what they are learning in new situations**
- ✓ **They provide opportunities for students to reflect on the people they are becoming**

(Kuh, 2008; excerpts from O'Neill, Peer Review, 2010)

Exercise #1: Applying the Hallmarks



- *Identify a HIP hallmark that interests you.*
- *What could you do in your LC course/program to increase that hallmark?*
 - *Share responses in your group.*
 - *Then, discuss what is needed to make the change (time? Faculty development? Funds? Special resources/technology?) summarize the needs.*



High Impact Pedagogical Practices



- 1. Engagement in effective educational activities in the first year is essential to student persistence & success*

NSSE Items: FY High-Impact Pedagogical Practices

- Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions
- Made a class presentation
- Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment
- Worked with other students on projects during class
- Worked with classmates outside of class on assignments
- Tutored or taught other students (paid or voluntary)
- Participated in a community-based project as part of course
- Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor
- Discussed ideas from readings/classes with faculty outside class
- Received prompt feedback on your academic performance
- Worked harder than you thought
- Worked with faculty on activities outside coursework (committees, student life, etc.)
- Discussed ideas from readings/classes with others
- Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity and those who differ from you - religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values

High Impact Pedagogical Practices



1. Engagement in the first year is essential to student persistence & success

2. Historically underserved students benefit more than others from the same educational practices

Examples of Undergraduate Research in TLCs



- **“Our Chemical World”**
 - First-year students paired with science faculty conducting research
- **“It’s Not Easy Being Green”**
 - First-year students conduct research project on environmental issue in Indianapolis under the guidance of faculty researchers



Service Learning in TLCs



**33% Include
Service Learning**

- 3 Education TLCs
- 3 Nursing TLCs
- 2 SPEA TLCs
- 2 University College TLCs
- 1 Liberal Arts TLC

**24% Include One Time
Service Projects**

- 2 Engineering TLCs
- 2 Liberal Arts TLCs
- 2 Psychology TLCs
- 2 University College TLCs

LCs and Undergraduate Research

Eastern Oregon:

Ensure FYs (60% first-gen) exposed to HIPs early.

- 2 quarter, linked FY seminars;
- Undergrad Research in HUM 101

The screenshot shows the AAC&U News website. At the top left is the AAC&U logo. To its right is the title "AAC&U NEWS" with the tagline "INSIGHTS AND CAMPUS INNOVATIONS IN LIBERAL EDUCATION". Below this is a navigation menu with five categories: FRONT PAGE, FEATURE, FACTS & FIGURES, NEWS & EVENTS, and PERSPECTIVE. The main content area features a sidebar on the left with links for AAC&U HOME, ABOUT AAC&U, PRESS ROOM, LEAP, PUBLICATIONS, and MEETINGS. The main article is titled "FEATURE: AAC&U MEMBER INNOVATIONS" and has a sub-headline "Engaging Students with High-Impact Practices at Eastern Oregon University". The article text begins with "Eastern Oregon University has faced challenges in the past several years that were disheartening even for an institution founded on a sense of can-do frontier optimism. The university, an institution of about 3,700 students located in La Grande, Oregon, serves a remote rural area the size of

www.aacu.org/aacu_news/index.cfm

LC Classroom Environment



- **Positive** = linkages, communication between faculty, active learning, sense of community



- **Negative** – no linkages, faculty in conflict,



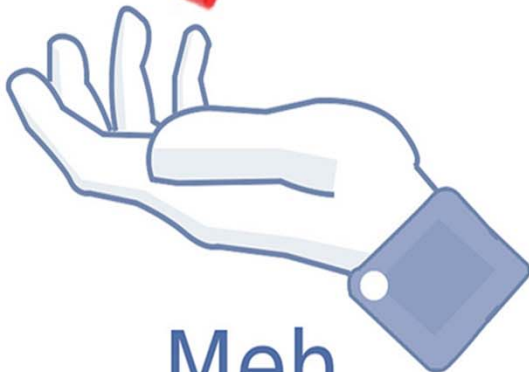
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- **Mixed** – mostly positive, but weak links

LC Environment



- **What kind of LC environment do you intend to create?**
- **What design and instructional practices facilitate this environment?**
- **What do you need to foster this goal?**
- **What concerns do you have?**



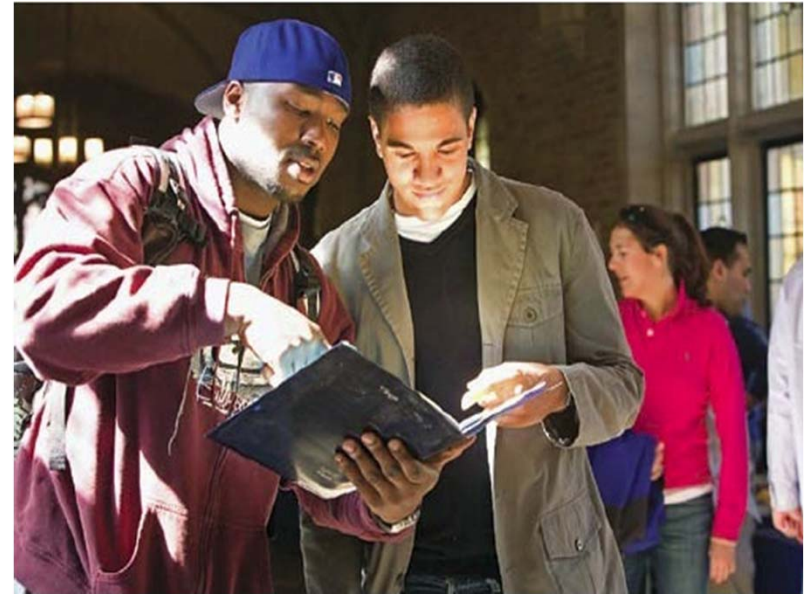
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Integrative Learning





Learning Communities: What Matters



- Associated with deep learning gains, residential aspect matters less than what happens within courses
- LC programs that integrate material across courses are associated with higher student engagement & learning

Integrative Learning and Learning Communities

Assertions:

- 1. Integrative learning is the goal.**
- 2. To optimize the value of learning communities, increase opportunities for integrative activities and assignments.**

Integrated Learning and LCs

The substance of what happens within the LC is what matters most for students... What students learn is shaped by the assignments or assessments they are invited to do.

Integration experiences in LCs are the best approach to enhance the quality of student learning.

- Lardner & Malnarich, 2008

What is integrative learning?

- Integrative learning is an understanding and a disposition that a student builds across the curriculum and co-curriculum, from making simple connections among ideas and experiences to synthesizing and transferring learning to new, complex situations within and beyond the campus.



Integrative Activities in LCs promote student gains

- **Integrating content across courses**
- **Integrating assignments, projects, and experiences outside of class (real world applications)**
- **Integrative discussion group (bring the ideas together, make application in seminar)**

Deep & Integrative Learning

- **What deep and integrative learning practices do you intend to emphasize in your LC?**
- **What will you do to foster deep and integrative learning?**



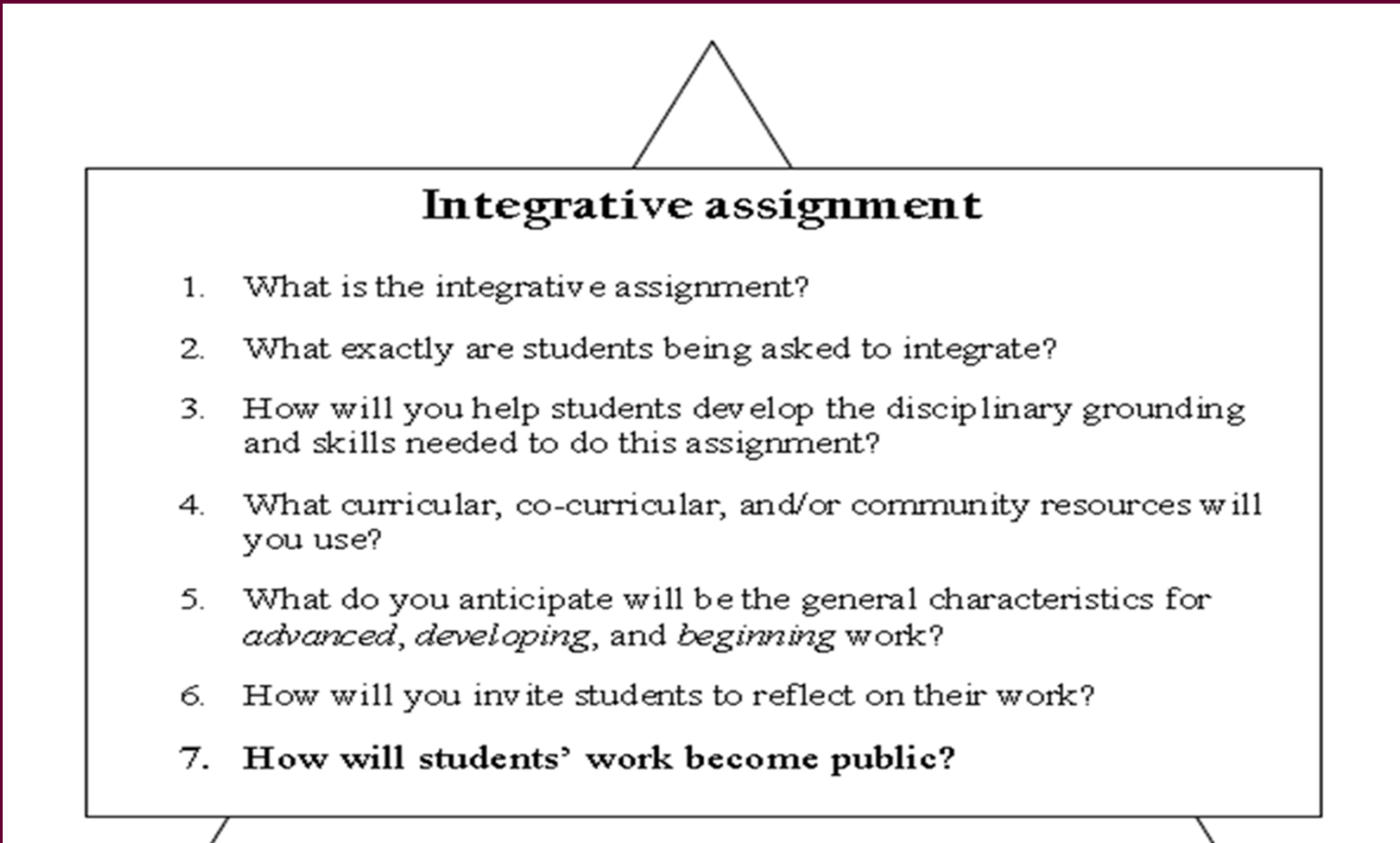
Integrated Activities Make a Difference, *and more is better!!!*

- **Higher the frequency of integrative activities in LC courses, the higher the frequency of doing activities that promote higher order thinking, reflective & integrative learning**
- **More integrated activities in a LC, the more students report effort in academic pursuits & collaborating with peers in and outside class**
- **Lack of impact for students in non-integrated LCs lends support to position that intentionally structured integrative activities are necessary to increase deep learning**

Important Considerations for FY and Integration in LCs

- **First year projects should be developmentally appropriate**
- **Student should have some input into choice of topic if feasible (with appropriate guidelines)**
- **Integrative nature of project should be explicit**
- **Include a presentation component**
- **Assignments should be challenging, but not so daunting that students are frustrated**
- **There should be, whenever possible, a reflective element in the activity or assignment**
- **Focus as much on process as product.**

Integrative Exercise



Integrative assignment

1. What is the integrative assignment?
2. What exactly are students being asked to integrate?
3. How will you help students develop the disciplinary grounding and skills needed to do this assignment?
4. What curricular, co-curricular, and/or community resources will you use?
5. What do you anticipate will be the general characteristics for *advanced*, *developing*, and *beginning* work?
6. How will you invite students to reflect on their work?
7. **How will students' work become public?**

Designing Purposeful & Integrative Learning

“Teaching the Contemporary” What is the public issue or question?

How will students apply what they are learning to actual problems or questions in the world?

Integrative assignment

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6. How will you invite students to reflect on their work?
7. **How will students’ work become public?**

Disciplinary grounding/areas of expertise:
What do you *most* want students to learn from your course, program or discipline?

“Big ideas”, key practices, and intellectual traits

Possibilities for connections:
What curricular, co-curricular, and community resources will you use?

Books, films, community events, local experts, speakers, field trips, etc.

LC Integrated Learning Exercise

- What do you **want students to know and be able to do**, in the context of the course you are contributing to the learning community?
- What **public issue** can serve as the subject of learning-community inquiry?
- What **resources** can you draw on to enrich student learning? (e.g., campus lecture series, themes, or common read, connecting classroom learning with out-of-class experiences)

EXAMPLE of LC Integrated Assignment

LC courses: Introduction to Philosophy (PHI 101) and American Government & Politics (GOV 101)

- QUESTION/ISSUE: What appears to be the political platform of the Tea Party?
- INTEGRATIVE ASSIGNMENT: Briefly summarize and explain the main political ideas of Hobbes and Locke, and indicate which are closer to the Tea Party. Also speculate as to what Rousseau and Marx might say about the Tea Party and why.
- Set up blog on Blackboard in which students assume role of different political thinkers and comment on Tea Party. Debate during session of Contemporary Affairs Club.
- Explain name "Tea Party" and how it's connected to US political traditions.
- PHI 101 outcomes: understand key philosophical terms, analyze arguments, offer/explain counterarguments, apply relevant ideas to current events.
- GOV 101 outcomes: understand how socioeconomic factors condition political outcomes, understand a particular political issue (e.g., immigration, health care), apply relevant ideas to current events.
- Co-curricular connections: debate during Contemporary Affairs club, blog/Blackboard site, analyze a particular political issue from different philosophical perspectives.

LC Design Considerations

- ▶ **Situational factors** – student demographics, prior learning
- ▶ **Learning Goals** – What do you want students to get out of the experience? What is important for them to learn and retain, 2-3 years after the course is over? What kind of thinking or application abilities do you want them to develop? How do you want them to keep on learning after the course/program is over?
- ▶ **Feedback and Assessment** – What will students do to demonstrate that they have achieved the learning goals for the course/program? At what level?
- ▶ **Teaching/Learning Activities** – should be appropriate, necessary and follow from the LGs.
- ▶ **Integration** – all components are in alignment and support each other.

(adapted from L. Dee Fink, 2003)

AAC&Us VALUE Rubric Integrative Learning



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FALL 2008 VALUE INTEGRATIVE LEARNING METARUBRIC DRAFT FOR PUBLIC RELEASE

This rubric is the first step in a rubric development process that will produce additional drafts, each responsive to the feedback received. Feedback deadline is February 15, 2009. The next draft of this rubric will be available in May 2009. For more information or to give feedback, please email Wende Morgaine at wendemm@gmail.com. Thank you!

Evaluators are encouraged to assign a zero to any performance that doesn't meet level one performance.

	4	3	2	1
Connections to experience <i>Connects relevant experience & academic knowledge</i>	Shows evidence of combining fields of study and one's own perspective on classroom content as well as life situations to illuminate and deepen one's analysis, synthesis, or interpretation(s).	Demonstrates an understanding of the influence of fields of study with one's own experience outside of the classroom.	Begins to appropriately associate one's own experience outside of the classroom with fields of study.	Demonstrates some understanding of how one's own experience outside of formal classroom relates to fields of study.
Connections to discipline <i>Sees (makes) connections across disciplines, perspectives</i>	Extends and recombines theories/frameworks using examples and facts to deepen analysis of issues or define/solve problems; takes multiple perspectives on a range of issues.	Uses examples, facts, and theories from beyond a field of study, and identifies multiple perspectives.	Includes an example, fact, or theory from outside a field of study; acknowledges the presence or possibility of other perspectives.	Stays within the confines of a discipline in the context of assignments; and articulates one perspective.
Transfer <i>Adapts knowledge, concepts, and/or tools from one discipline to another</i>	Adapts familiar frameworks for new uses.	Synthesizes familiar frameworks into new uses.	Applies familiar frameworks to new situations.	Connects familiar frameworks to new situations.
Communication <i>Balances form and content in communication choices</i>	Within context of portfolio (or artifacts being reviewed), demonstrates clear ability to integrate or synthesize content, medium, and form to skillfully communicate complex learning.	Begins to use medium and form to contribute and respond to content.	Demonstrates of an awareness of how form can contribute and respond to content.	Uses medium and form adequately to convey content.
Identity as Learner <i>Reflects on</i>	In challenging learning situations, articulates one's identity as a learner and contributor to a variety of settings, which may include academic work, campus and civic environments.	Articulates one's identity as a learner, beginning to contribute in environments characterized by ambiguity and risk.	Articulates one's own learning strengths and sets goals for improvement.	Begins to identify one's self as a learner, differentiating appropriately one's self from what one is learning.

Peer Teaching/Mentors



Value of peer mentors/advisors

- “Student’s peer group is the single most potent source of influence on growth & development” (Astin, 1993)
- Peer learning is an effective, engaging pedagogy for all students



Peer Mentors & Peer Collaboration



- **Can be formal: teaching, lead seminar, advise; or informal, i.e., help students get to know each other in class so they can identify peers to work with outside of class**
- **Facilitate, help students form study groups**
- **Help students recognize value of collaborative learning (i.e., point out how paper improved after peer assessment, ask students to reflect on what they learned from the group experience)**
- **Make TIME for students to interact**

Peer advisor in LC helps teach or coordinate



- UTEP learning communities (3 clustered courses) emphasize active and collaborative learning, structured group presentations, peer evaluation, peer tutoring, and meetings outside of class
- Clustering insures that their mostly commuter population see some of their peers regularly, facilitates studying other peer learning
- *Peer tutors and mentors are well-trained!*

LC Peer advisor as teacher, counselor

- Colorado State University peer mentors assigned to LC (cluster of 3 courses)
- “Key Mentor” serves as TA for anchor course for all clusters
- Facilitate spring semester service learning required hours
- Meet mid-semester with students for academic progress conference



Require LC Out-of-Class Activities

- Co-curricular activities related to LC, course – lecture, media night, theatre, club/ organization events
- Academic support - success workshops
- Social events – dinners, coffee hours, films
- Community-based project or service hours
- Field trip – visit a company, agency; weekend retreat

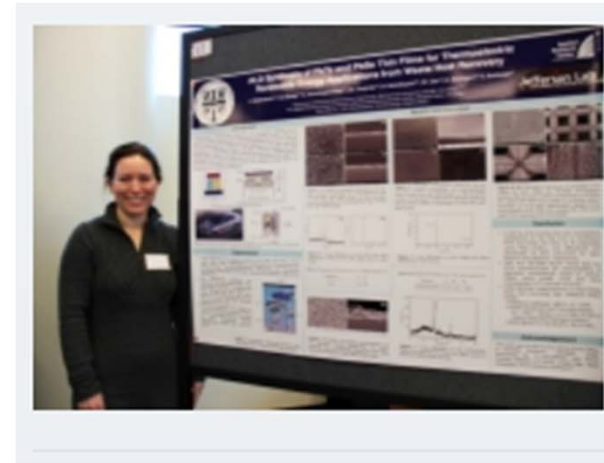


Value of Out-of-Class Activities in LC

- **Out-of-class activities** associated with gains in self-understanding, deep learning, & enriched social life.
- Helps students get to know each other, and to get to know faculty
- Opportunity for applied learning & reflection



Some Considerations for ODU and LCs



Just putting cohort of students together in learning communities does not in and of itself, guarantee engagement in effective educational practices or deep learning



Many ways to structure Learning Communities...



- First year experience
- Along curricular lines
- Discipline based
- Common career interests
- Social interests
- Residential living
- Build around student organizations
- To encourage interdisciplinary studies

Structure based on your concerns, goals for LCs at ODU.

Other LC Lessons Learned

- **Know your students' characteristics, needs, aspirations & adapt services, program, and facilities to meet the needs of students**
- **The entire campus must be vested – may require redefining roles as administrators, faculty, staff, and support service providers**
- **Educational excursions, integrating experiences, are critical to learning and developing the whole person**
- **Common residential components in a structured setting can help**



Essential Partnerships Between Student & Academic Affairs

- LCs demand student time & effort in and out of class
- Ensure all educators guide students to and support LCs
- Collaborate to deliver effective LCs



- **If you're after deep learning, greater collaborative learning & academic effort then, LCs with intentionally structured integrative activities are the way to go**



- **LCs with integrated activities are attractive option for faculty who want students to become deep learners**

LCs as Disruption

The connection between integrative thinking, or experiential learning, and the social network, or participatory culture, is no longer peripheral to our enterprise but is the nexus that should guide and reshape our curricula in the current disruptive moment in higher education learning.

-- Randy Bass, 2012 The Problem of Learning in Higher Education



Discussion and Comments

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