



Gustavus Adolphus College
Learning and Living
Communities
Strategic Initiative

May 13, 2008

“A paradigm shift is taking hold in American higher education. In its briefest form, the paradigm that has governed our colleges is this: A college is an institution that exists to provide instruction. Subtly but profoundly we are shifting to a new paradigm: A college is an institution that exists to produce learning. This shift changes everything. It is both needed and wanted. “

A New Paradigm for Undergraduate Education
Robert B. Barr and John Tagg

Learning and Living Communities Committee Members:

Sujay Rao, History Faculty and Co-Chair
Charlie Strey, Residential Life and Co-Chair
Erin Berreth, Residential Life
Thia Cooper, Religion Faculty and Residential Life
Colleen Jacks, Biology Faculty
Chris Johnson, Center for Vocational Reflection
John Lammert, Biology Faculty
Kate Stenger, Political Science Faculty and Residential Life
Troy Seppelt, Residential Life
Jeff Thomae, Residential Life



Learning and Living Strategic Initiative

Vision Statement:

Learning and Living Communities offer an innovative and intentional means of creating a seamless environment that links students' learning in and out of the traditional classroom. The Learning and Living experience adds a new dimension to Gustavus Adolphus College's tradition of educating the "whole student" for a life of leadership and service to society.

Mission Statement:

Students in the Learning and Living Communities learn about an issue of broad importance to society from a variety of academic perspectives and put their learning into practice through residential living and a series of supervised community-based internships and research experiences. Though they will ultimately specialize in many different academic disciplines, graduates of Learning and Living Communities will demonstrate interest and expertise in compelling "trans-disciplinary" problems.

Point of Departure:


Learning communities have played a highly visible role in higher education since the late 1980s. Their popularity stems from their potential to bring coherence to increasingly complex and fragmented institutions.

Students are often unable to integrate new material learned within and without the classroom to achieve a comprehensive learning experience in college. This occurs primarily because campuses are comprised of three distinct zones – the faculty zone, the administrative zone, and the student zone. In a traditional institution, only the student is required to migrate daily between the three zones and attempt to navigate the collegiate experience successfully, hopefully learning something along the way (Schroeder, Minor, and Tarkow in *Learning Communities: New Structures, New Partnerships for Learning*, p. 68).

Proponents of learning communities point to their ability to integrate knowledge across academic disciplines, to promote social networks among students, to increase student engagement, performance, and retention, to contribute to professional development of faculty and administrators, and to promote innovation (Love in *Learning Communities*, pp. 2-4).

Many different models of learning communities have been created in American colleges and universities. Some create a cohort of students who enroll in one specially designed course together while also enrolling in courses taken by students outside the learning community. Others create a cluster of courses taken exclusively by students in the learning community. Others still feature a comprehensive and team-taught curriculum offered exclusively to students in the learning community. Some of these learning communities are residential – their students live in the same residence hall – while many others are not (Love and Tokuno in *Learning Communities*, pp. 9-11).

In considering the place of learning communities at Gustavus Adolphus College, we have focused primarily on their potential to integrate students' experiences both across academic disciplines and between the realms of academic and student affairs, which we envision leading to even higher-quality student learning. We are also attracted to their potential to promote professional development and innovation among faculty and administrators. We envision a program that brings together students, faculty and administrators from across the college to create more meaningful educational experiences. Due to its nature as a selective residential



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liberal arts college, Gustavus Adolphus College has less to gain in terms of improving student retention, a major focus of learning communities at many other institutions.

Integrated Goals:


- ✦ To promote connections between academic and residential experiences among students, faculty, and administrators
- ✦ To foster an interest among students, faculty and administrators in problem-based learning that will help create stronger communities
- ✦ To promote strategies among students, faculty and administrators that will lead to responsible leadership and respectful relationships between individuals

Academic Outcomes:

- To develop a stronger base of knowledge regarding the theme of the Learning and Living Community
- To develop the skills and habits of mind central to the liberal arts, particularly writing, oral communication, and critical thinking
- To promote the integration of knowledge from various disciplines that relate to the theme of the Learning and Living Community
- To promote the application of knowledge to address a problem of broad importance to society

Residential Life Outcomes:

- **Sense of Belonging:** Students will have the ability to get along with others, feel acceptance and approval, and know one's role within a group or relationship. It can be evaluated in several areas: emotional autonomy, interdependence, relationships with peers, and intimate relationships.
- **Knowledge and Skills:** Knowledge is sought and acquired in all environments and situations that a college student experiences. Acquiring knowledge includes increasing self-awareness, adjusting to one's surroundings, gathering and incorporating information, and learning effective decision-making and problem-solving skills.
- **Integrity:** Developing acceptance of one's self and others. That acceptance encompasses backgrounds, lifestyles, beliefs and value systems, and cultures. To attain it, students must begin to evaluate their own attitudes and values, be willing to listen to and try to understand others, and to make a commitment to be constantly re-learning. Each student will consider how a person's values influence their own self-esteem, relationships with others, academic involvement, and career and lifestyle choices.
- **Self Responsibility:** Integrates one's self of identity and purpose. It involves having trust in one's skills and abilities, accepting responsibility for one's decisions and actions, determining one's career and life plans, and taking risks in order to achieve personal growth.



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Program Design for Newly Created LLCs (draft language)

Learning and Living Communities are built around a set of roughly 4 First Term Seminars with common or closely-related syllabi that enroll a total of approximately 60 students. These First Term Seminars will focus on a problem of broad importance to society that transcends particular academic disciplines. The 60 students in the Learning and Living Community will reside in the same residence hall, which preferably will be dedicated exclusively to Learning and Living programs.

Integrative learning is central to the Learning and Living Communities. Students will integrate knowledge from various academic disciplines that inform the particular problem they are focused on. Moreover, students will integrate their academic and residential experiences, applying what they are learning in each setting to the other.

Coursework for the First Term Seminars will be designed intentionally to tie into courses offered by departments such as Biology, Economics/Management, Chemistry, and Psychology that are commonly taken by first-year students. Students will bring expertise from these academic disciplines to bear on the problem they are studying and will learn from peers who are exposed to different disciplines. In doing this, students will learn to appreciate the strength of each discipline. More importantly, they will learn the value of combining different ways of thinking.

In the residence halls, students will take responsibility for administering their living space in coordination with Residence Life staff. Students will adopt a goal to make progress in their own residential community towards addressing the problem they are studying in their First Term Seminars. Students' progress towards achieving this goal, and their creation of a process by which to work in the residence hall, will contribute to their grade for the First Term Seminar.

During the January Interim Experience, students in the Learning and Living Communities will enroll in a specially designed course built around a community-based learning internship. In this course, they will work with a local organization relevant to the problem they are studying. The course will include a reflective paper focusing on the first-year experience in the classroom, residence hall, and the wider community. During the spring semester, students will organize a conference to spread awareness of the issues they have been learning about and to disseminate their own work.

In the second year, students will be invited to continue their participation in the Learning and Living Community. This year will focus on combining growing disciplinary demands as students move towards declaring a major with continuing commitment to "trans-disciplinary" problems of broad social importance. In the fall, students will complete a 1-credit course that combines a community-based learning project with supervised readings in the discipline of their choice. The culmination of the course will be a reflective paper that integrates experiences in the Learning and Living courses, residential life, and the academic discipline of choice. Throughout the second year, students will take responsibility for working with Residence Life staff and first-year members of the Learning and Living Communities to achieve group goals in the residence hall.

The Learning and Living Communities will host a series of speakers from the area who will bring unique perspectives and expertise to study of the relevant problem. In this way, common areas of the Learning and Living Communities will function, at times, as an extension of the classroom.

Program Design for the Crossroads LLC (draft language)

Learning and Living Communities being built around a currently existing program will be enhanced to integrate academic content more fully within the residence community. The Crossroads program will focus on

area of the Global Focus. The course will include a reflective paper focusing on the first-year experience in the classroom, residence hall, and the January travel course. During the spring semester, students will organize a conference to spread awareness of the issues they have been learning about and to disseminate their own work.

In the second year, students will be invited to continue their participation in the Crossroads Learning and Living Community. This year will focus on combining growing disciplinary demands as students move towards declaring a major with continuing commitment to issues of international and intercultural importance. In the fall, students will complete a 1-credit course that combines a community-based learning project with supervised readings in the discipline of their choice. The culmination of the course will be a reflective paper that integrates experiences in the Learning and Living courses, residential life, and the academic discipline of choice. Throughout the second year, students will take responsibility for working with Residence Life staff and first-year members of the Crossroads Learning and Living Community to achieve group goals in the residence hall.

The Crossroads Learning and Living Community will host a series of speakers, activities, and programs that will bring unique perspectives and expertise to the study of international and intercultural relations. In this way, common areas of the Crossroads Learning and Living Community will function, at times, as an extension of the classroom.

Physical Aspects of LLC Residence Halls

- Smaller building for each program (under 90 residents). The building would include single and double rooms within a suite style arrangement. Each floor would have central space for students to gather. The main floor would have a multi-purpose room designed for classes AND hall gatherings.
- In retrofitted buildings, common space will need to be upgraded to be used for classroom and evening meetings as well as lounge space for meetings and informal gathering of students. This space will be outfitted as a classroom with computer and internet connection, projector, screen, sound system, etc.
- Program specific needs such as
 - *Sustainability program: ability to use/recycle gray water, ways to monitor room electric usage, etc.
 - *Crossroads program: access to foreign language television broadcasts.

Personnel Roles

- Learning and Living Program staff
 - Director of Learning and Living Communities: Coordinates the planning and implementation process for all LLCs. Attends regular meetings with LLC team. The Director is a faculty member with a 2-course release.
 - Faculty members: Recruited by or volunteered to the Director of Learning and Living Communities, faculty members teach classes and act as advisors to the FTS class they are teaching. Participation in the LLC program is reflected in the reward structure of tenure and promotions.
 - Assistant Director of Residential Life for Learning and Living: This person will direct development, implementation, supervision, and assessment of the Learning Living Programs for the Residential Life Office.
 - Peer Mentors: Students returning for a second year assist in the continuation of the program by acting as guides for students new to the LLC.
 - Collegiate Fellows: Act in traditional role though they are committed to the LLC philosophy.

Attend regular meetings with LLC team.

•Student Teaching/Program Assistants: Assist the Director and faculty in the implementation of the LLC. Attend regular meetings with LLC team.

Partners

- Admission Office
- Advancement
- Advising Center
- Career Center
- Center for Vocational Reflection
- Community Service Center
- Faculty Committee on Student Life
- First Term Seminars Program
- Johnson Center for Environmental Innovation
- Kendall Center for Engaged Learning
- Office of College Relations
- Student Senate Residence Life Committee

Proposed Program Budget

These budgets are provided in reverse order of preference Option C representing a minimal program and Option A the more complete and extensive program.

Option C

The Learning and Living Communities will begin with a faculty Director with a 2-course release who will supervise planning of the LLCs, recruit faculty, administrators, and students to participate, and begin professional development workshops for the program.

In the second year, the LLCs will be based on 5 sections of FTS (4 in a newly-designed LLC plus one devoted to Crossroads), or roughly 80 students. The program will also feature a spring conference of student work.

In the third year, the LLC program will add sophomore internships for students who choose to continue. Assuming that roughly half of students continue into the second year and that 10 internships are the equivalent of one course, this will require the equivalent of 4 courses to staff.

In subsequent years, the program would continue as in the third year.

Option B

Same as option C EXCEPT:

- 4 January Interim Experience courses beginning in Year 2 (3 courses on campus, plus one travel course).
- 2 additional LLCs, doubling the size of the program to roughly 150 students The culmination of the course

will be a reflective paper that integrates experiences in the Learning and Living courses, residential life, and the academic discipline of choice., beginning in Year 4.

An additional course release for the Director of Learning and Living Communities beginning in Year 4.

Option A

Same as option B EXCEPT:

- 2 additional LLCs in Year 6, 2 more in Year 8, and 2 more in Year 10, quintupling the size of the program to roughly 375 students.
- An additional course release for the Director beginning in Year 6 and a full-time Director of Learning and Living Communities beginning in Year 8.
- A new residence hall devoted to LLCs.

Program Needs

•Assessment: Learning and Living Community assessment will occur through a variety of tools to include:

- *Pre Occupancy Survey:
- *Post Occupancy Survey:
- *Focus Groups
- *GPA Data:
- *Program Retention Data:
- *Program Specific Assessment:

- LLC Advisory Committee: An advisory committee will be developed consisting of the Director of LLC, the Assistant Director of Residential Life for LLC, faculty, program alumni, and current students. The purpose of the committee will be to advise the Director as s/he oversees program development and implementation.
- Marketing Plan and Website Development: As the LLCs involve students that are not currently on campus, it is imperative that a cohesive marketing plan be development. We propose a partnership between the LLC Director, Assistant Director-Res Life, Admissions, and the Office of College Relations to create this plan. Implementation of the plan would need to begin early fall term, 2008, and proceed through the year. Admissions counselors would, also, need to be briefed on the LLCs and asked to encourage first year student participation.
- Conferences and Workshops: There are a number of conferences and workshops that offer insights into Learning and Living Communities. It is suggested that monies be made available to the Director and Assistant Director to annually attend these conferences.
- Learning and Living Community Institute: A workshop will be designed for faculty and administrators to gather together to learn about LLCs and to encourage development of collaborative proposals. These workshops will begin in summer 2008 and occur annually. It is suggested that a stipend be provided to faculty that choose to attend the workshop.
- Learning and Living Community End of the Year Reflection and Evaluation Retreat: Near the conclusion of each academic year, a retreat will assist students in reflecting on their experience within the LLC. This retreat would be at an off-campus location for focused conversation and work.

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Planning Calendar

Year	Activity One: First Years Sustainability	Activity One: Sophomores Sustainability	Activity Two: First Years Crossroads	Activity Two: Sophomores Crossroads
Summer	Recruit Faculty Learning and Living Institute		Recruit Faculty Learning and Living Institute	
One	Planning for LLC with Sustainability theme and 4-6 course collaborations		Plan for FTS course on Global Insight and possible January term travel course.	
Two	Implementation	Planning for LLC for SOPHOMORE students	Implementation	Planning for LLC for SOPHOMORE students
Three	Assessment/Re- implementation	Implementation	Assessment/Re- implementation	Implementation

course, students will focus on aspects of international and intercultural relations specifically relevant to the

Supporting Materials

Books

- Tagg, John (2003). *The Learning Paradigm College*. Bolton, Massachusetts: Anker Publishing Company, Inc.
- Schroeder, Charles, Phyllis Mable, and Associates (1994). *Realizing the Educational Potential of Residence Halls*. San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Strange, C. Carney, and James H. Banning (2001) *Educating by Design*. San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Kuh, George D., Jillian Kinzie, John H Schoh, Elizabeth J. Whitt, and Associates (2005). *Student Success in College: Creating Conditions that Matter*. San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Articles

- Barr, Robert B., and John Tagg (1995). *From Teaching to Learning—A New Paradigm for Undergraduate Education*. Change Magazine.
- Kerr, Kathleen G., and James Tweedy (2006) *Beyond Seat Time and Student Satisfaction: A Curricular Approach to Residential Education*. About Campus, November/December, 2006.
- *Living-Learning Communities: Do They Make A Difference?* Assessment Bulletin, Volume 5 Number 1, November 2001.
- Pasque, Penny A. & Rena Murphy (2005). *The Intersections of Living-Learning Programs and Social Identity as Factors of Academic Achievement and Intellectual Engagement*. Journal of College Student Development, July/August Vol. 46 Number 4.
- Sternberg, Robert J. (2008). *Interdisciplinary: An Alternate to Traditional Majors and Minors*. Liberal Education, Winter 2008.
- *Learning Communities*. Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education:
- MacGregor, Jean, & Barbara Leigh Smith (2005). *Where are Learning communities Now? National Leaders Take Stock*. About Campus, May/June 2005.
- Luna, George and Gahagan, Jimmie, eds. *Learning Initiatives in the Residential Setting* (Monograph No. 48). Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition, 2008.
- Levine, Jodi H., ed. *Learning Communities: New Structures, New Partnerships for Learning* (Monograph No. 26). Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition, 1999.
- Gabelnick, F., MacGregor J., Matthews, R.S., and Smith, B.L., eds. *Learning Communities: Creating Connections Among Students, Faculty, and Disciplines* (New Directions for Teaching and Learning No. 41). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1990.

POSITION DESCRIPTION: DIRECTOR OF LEARNING AND LIVING COMMUNITIES

TITLE:	Director of Learning and Living Communities
REPORTS TO:	Provost/ Vice President for Academic Affairs and Vice President for Students Affairs/Dean of Students
SUPERVISES:	Learning and Living Program Assistant
PARTNERS WITH:	Provost's Office, Faculty, Dean of Students, Assistant Dean of Students/Director of Residential Life, Office of Dining Services, Career Center's Internship Office, Center for Vocational Reflection, Johnson Center for Environmental Innovation, Kendall Center for Engaged Learning, and Admissions.

POSITION GOALS:

To develop, implement, and sustain Learning and Living Communities at Gustavus through active leadership in the creation and supervision of volunteer and professional staff, recruitment of faculty, and coordination with campus offices.

To facilitate, support, and participate in the mission of the college by assisting in providing academic environments within the residence halls conducive to educational achievement.

To assist with students' orientation to college life and to their self-development to the extent that each understands and evaluates his/her own purpose for being in college.

To supervise, administer and evaluate a student LLC Program Assistant.

To serve as a resource for students in academic areas and to provide referrals as needed.

To interpret Gustavus Learning and Living objectives, policies, rules and regulations to students and to interpret student attitudes, opinions and actions to appropriate college officials.

PERFORMANCE RESPONSIBILITIES: Major responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the following:

To intentionally design and implement Learning and Living Communities at Gustavus Adolphus College.

To administer the Learning Living Program Assistant program by coordinating the selection and training program, as well as on-going developmental and evaluation systems.

To communicate with administrative offices that are directly or indirectly affected by the Learning and Living Environment and to ensure that necessary reports and other work are completed in accordance with established procedures.

To coordinate with faculty members in developing and implementing the Learning and Living Community; to serve as a resource and facilitator for those seeking to develop courses and activities for the Communities; to advise and counsel any individual residents or resident groups seeking assistance in developing Community programs and expectations.

To assist in the formation of policies that govern the Learning Living Community; to assist students in understanding LLC philosophy and the rules and policies established for community living; to warn or discipline students whose behavior is inconsistent with the standards set for the LLC; and to work with Residential Life staff members in dealing with inappropriate behavior encountered.

To promote the safety of students, their property and the property of the College.