

Introduction to Successful Learning Communities

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Thinking About Planning and Building a Learning Community Program

- Why a learning community program on your campus? Where did the idea come from?
- What's your current status?
- Who on your campus is involved in the conversation and planning?



Why LCs?

- Retention and Persistence: Because students take multiple classes together as a cohort, they make social and academic bonds with each other and with their professors, so they tend to stay



- Integrative Learning: By collaborating to find common themes and connections, and to develop shared, integrative assignments, faculty provide opportunities for students to make connections across disciplines



Goals for Planning and Building a Learning Community Program

Will your planned LC program...

- Be aligned with the mission of your institution?
- Be intentionally aimed at improving student success?
- Be targeted toward a specific population?
- Accommodate student, faculty, and staff needs?
- Have a coordinating team whose skills are aligned with the tasks needed to develop the program?
- Be designed for continued collaboration among and between administration, program coordinators, faculty, IR, and support staff?
- Be designed to promote integrative learning?



Workshop Overview

What do you need to support and sustain an LC Program?



- Buy-in from stakeholders: faculty, administration, students, student services
- Support from Institutional Research (IR)
- Ongoing communication among stakeholders
- Funding (internal, external, both?)
- Encouragement of innovation
- Support for professional development

Buy-in: Faculty

- Include in the planning process
- Provide compensation (monetary and non-monetary)
- Consider scheduling needs
- Encourage cross-departmental collaboration
- Support to enroll courses
- Support to help address student needs
- Support for integrative learning
- What else?



Buy-in: Administration

- Include in the planning process
- Support the college's mission
- Try to reach all students
- Provide evidence of success = data
- Focus on assessments and outcomes to support accreditation
- Encourage cross-campus collaborations (academic affairs, student affairs, registrar, IR, college advancement, etc.)
- What else?



Buy-in: Students

- Consider student voices in the planning process
- Offer desirable courses and programs
- Offer prime-time/convenient schedules
- Offer a clear understanding of the benefits of participating in the program
- Institutional support for student success
- What else?



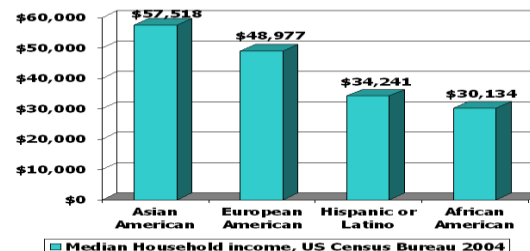
Buy-in: Student Services



- Include in the planning process
- Acknowledge as the ‘linchpin’ for enrollment
- Respect their role as the navigators and guides who support student success
- Facilitate their collaboration with faculty to address student needs
- Offer opportunities for professional development and include in LC team meetings
- What else?

Buy-in: Institutional Research

- Plan data collection in advance
 - Credible data can make or break a program
 - Funders and potential funders will want to see data
- Encourage collaboration with administrators, faculty and staff
- Encourage research and publications
- What else?



Ongoing Communication: Keeping Stakeholders in the Loop

- Have regular meetings to update and share information
 - Make sure all stakeholders are represented
 - Have clear agendas that address current goals
- Report outcomes on a regular basis (i.e. in person, email, newsletter, etc.)
- Periodically engage stakeholders in strategic planning
- What else?

COMMUNICATION

A hand holding a blue marker is shown underlining the word 'COMMUNICATION' in blue capital letters. The hand is positioned at the bottom right of the word, with the marker tip touching the underline.

Getting Funding



- Keep abreast of outcomes...data is key
- Stay current regarding national issues and trends and granting possibilities
- Write grants: A good grant writing team helps!
- Get the word out about your program
- Find a champion to serve as the liaison among all stakeholders and between stakeholders and internal and external resources
- What else?

Encouraging Innovation

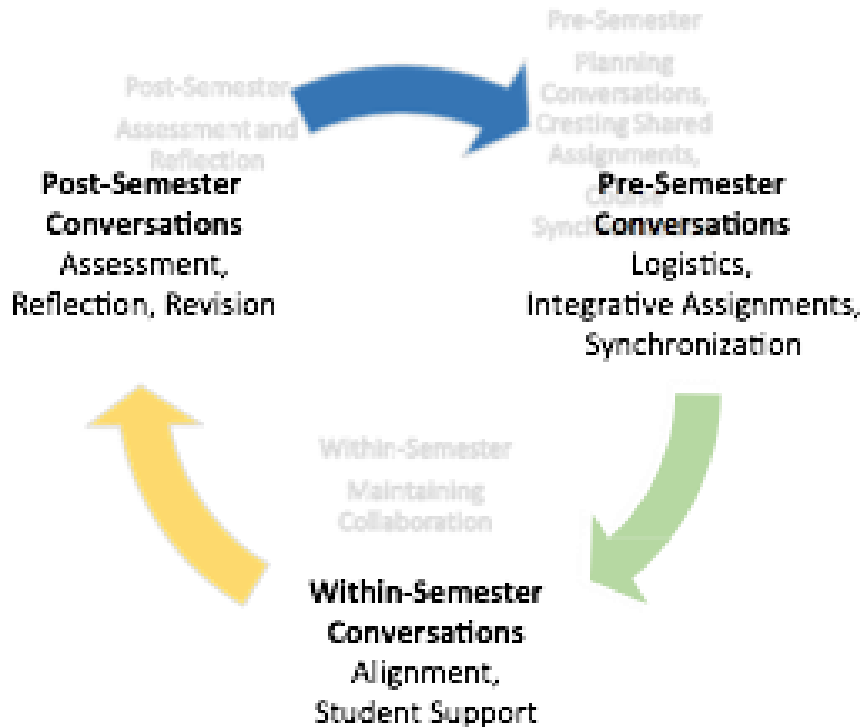
Over time...

- Make your program richer
 - Integrate other High Impact Practices (HIPs) (e.g., undergraduate research, FYs, service learning, etc.)
 - Develop new strategies for student success (e.g., advisement/counseling interventions, information literacy, out of classroom experiences, tech, etc.)
 - What else?
- Keep current with the field and share what you learn
 - Support participation in conferences (e.g., NLCC)
 - Support SoTL projects and other types of publications (e.g., LCR&P)
- Develop new internal and external partnerships
- Identify new target populations
- What else?



Professional Development (PD)

The academic focus of LCs is **integrative learning**. The work involved designing and maintaining an integrative curriculum requires PD that is sustained throughout the semester or quarter.



Professional Development (PD)

Pre-Semester Conversations

Instructors of linked courses familiarize themselves with each other's student learning outcomes, curricula, and course materials; collaborate to identify a common issue of direct relevance to students' lives that the courses can address; and create at least one shared, integrative, assignment. Teams may also develop a shared syllabus or share a common course site.

LEARNING



Professional Development (PD)

Within-Semester Conversations

Regular meetings give instructors the opportunity to keep each other up-to-date, making sure their courses stay aligned and increasing integration and coherency in the LC. Regular meetings also give instructors the opportunity to discuss student progress, when warranted, making early intervention more likely.



Professional Development (PD)

Post-Semester Conversations

When the semester is over, teams assess their students' work and revise their activities and assignments to further strengthen them. Teams might keep an ongoing assessment narrative, so that they are continually closing the loop. Teams might also review their collaboration.



Moving Forward: Building Your Learning Community Program



Jot down a few ideas....How will your LC program...

- Be aligned with the mission of your institution?
- Be intentionally aimed at improving student success?
- Be designed with respect to the students it serves?
- Accommodate student, faculty, and staff needs?
- Be staffed in a way that aligns people's skills with tasks?
- Be designed for continued collaboration among and between administration, program coordinators, faculty, IR, and support staff?
- Be designed to promote integrative learning?

Questions? Comments?

Thank you!

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