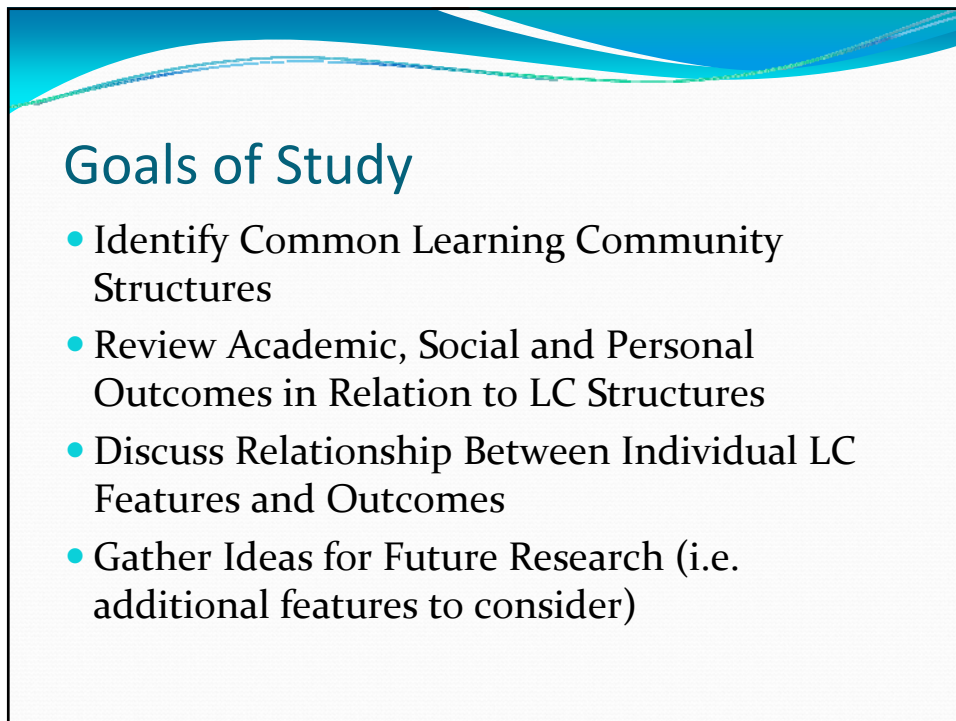



**How Learning Communities
Affect Academic, Social and
Personal Gains**

12th Annual National Learning
Communities Conference
Students at the Center

PRESENTERS:
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Goals of Study

- Identify Common Learning Community Structures
- Review Academic, Social and Personal Outcomes in Relation to LC Structures
- Discuss Relationship Between Individual LC Features and Outcomes
- Gather Ideas for Future Research (i.e. additional features to consider)

Outline of Session

- Define Learning Community & Review Survey
- Review Data Sample
- Common Learning Community Structures
- Outcome Scales: Academic, Personal, & Social Gains
- Results: How Outcomes Relate to LC Features & Structures
- Implications/Limitations
- Group Discussion

Define Learning Community & Review Survey



Defining Learning Community

- **Have you taken two or more classes together with the same students as part of an organized program at this school?** (e.g., Learning community, Living-Learning Programs, Freshman Interest groups (FIG), First-year Seminar)
 - Yes
 - No
 - Uncertain

Review Data Sample



Data Source

- NSSE Experimental Items
 - 2007 Learning Community Items
 - Tests Sample Survey Questions
 - 8,746 Respondents, ~1,200 LC participants
- National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)
 - Developed in 1998, 1,200+ baccalaureate institutions
 - Student engagement in activities empirically tied to student learning and effective institutional practice
 - 2007 administration:
 - 323,147 first-year and senior students
 - 610 Institutions in the U.S. and Canada



Institutions in Study

Alabama

Auburn University
Samford University

California

California State University-Dominguez
Hills
Fresno Pacific University

Colorado

Colorado State University

Connecticut

Central Connecticut State University
Eastern Connecticut State University

Florida

Flagler College
New College of Florida

Georgia

Georgia State University
Morehouse College
Oxford College of Emory University

Hawaii

University of Hawaii at Hilo

Idaho

Idaho State University

Indiana

University of Indianapolis

Iowa

Graceland University-Lamoni

Maryland

Goucher College

Massachusetts

Wentworth Institute of Technology

Michigan

Grand Valley State University

Missouri

Westminster College (MO)

Nebraska

University of Nebraska at Kearney

New York

Colby-Sawyer College
CUNY Brooklyn College
CUNY Medgar Evers College
York College (CUNY)
St. Francis College (NY)
Wells College

North Dakota

Minot State University

Ohio

Baldwin-Wallace College

Bowling Green State University

Pennsylvania

College Misericordia
Mount Aloysius College
Thiel College

South Carolina

Limestone College
Winthrop University

Tennessee

Lipscomb University
The University of Tennessee

West Virginia

West Liberty State College

Wisconsin

University of Wisconsin-Whitewater

Institution Characteristics

Carnegie Type	# Schools	% of Sample	% National
1 Doc RU-VH	2	5%	6%
2 Doc RU-H	3	8%	7%
3 Doc DRU	2	5%	5%
4 Masters-L	8	21%	22%
5 Masters-M	4	10%	12%
6 Masters-S	3	8%	8%
7 Bac-AS	8	21%	18%
8 Bac-Diverse	5	13%	23%
9 Other	4	10%	-na-

- 39 institutions
- 23 U.S. States
- 20 Public institutions/
18 Private institutions

Region	# Schools	% of Sample	% National
New England	4	10%	8%
Mid East	9	23%	18%
Great Lakes	5	13%	15%
Plains	4	10%	11%
Southeast	11	28%	24%
Southwest	0	0%	8%
Rocky Mountains	2	5%	3%
Far West	3	8%	10%
Outlying Areas	0	0%	2%

Student Characteristics

- First-Year Students
- 33% Male/ 67% Female
- 5% International students
- 5% Transfer students
- 99% Full-time
- 10% Student athletes
- 76% Live in Residence Hall or other Campus Housing

Student Reported Race/Ethnicity	# in Sample	% of Sample	% National
American Indian or other Native American	10	<1%	1%
Asian, Asian American or Pacific Islander	65	5%	6%
Black or African American	180	13%	12%
White (non-Hispanic)	936	68%	68%
Mexican, Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Other Hispanic Latino	62	6%	10%
Multiracial	21	2%	n/a
Other	24	2%	n/a
I prefer not to respond	74	5%	n/a
Total	1372		

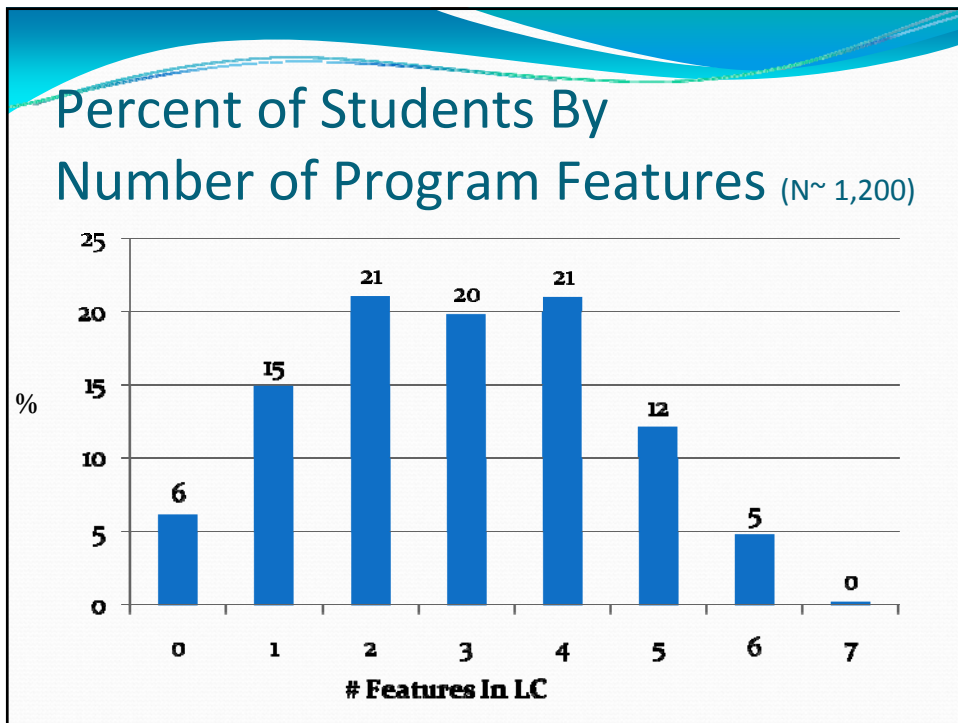
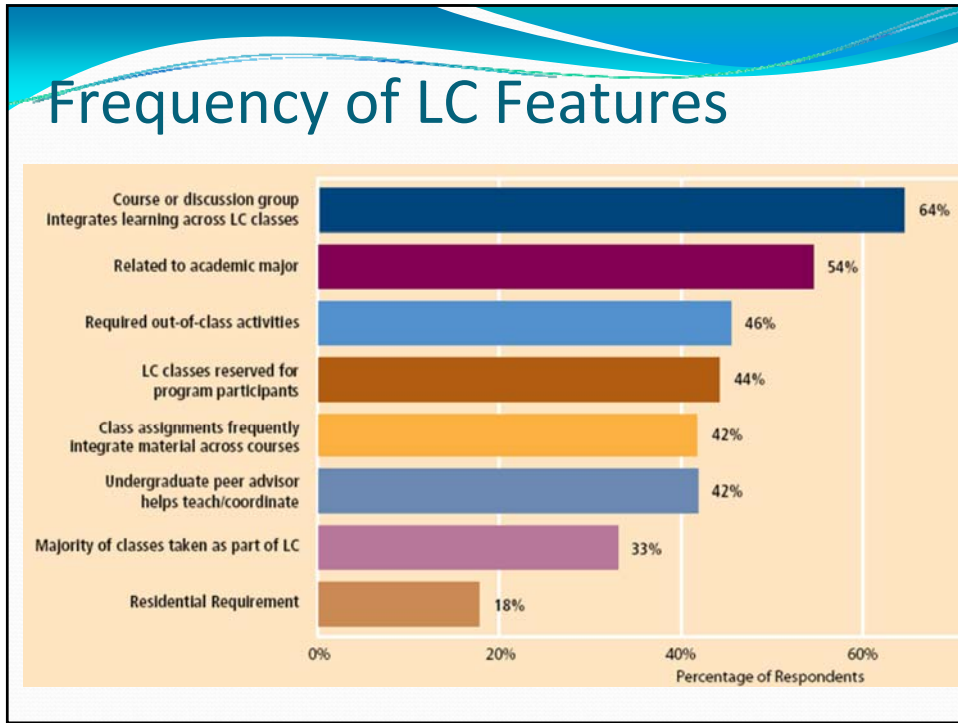
Most Common Learning Community Features & Structures

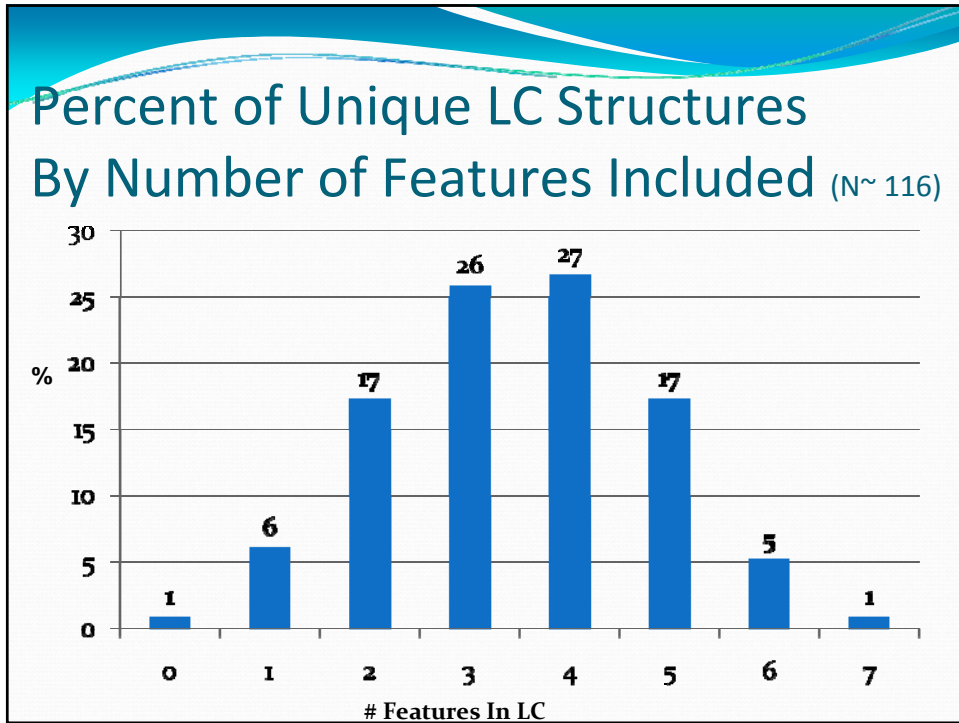


LC Features

- Features = Various components of LCs
- What are they?
 1. Classes reserved for LC students (exclusive)
 2. Majority of classes taken within LC
 3. Discussion group
 4. Faculty assign integrative work across LC classes
 5. Residential requirement
 6. Peer advisor helps teaches or coordinates
 7. Required to participate in extra-curriculars together

How Learning Communities Affect
Academic, Social, and Personal Gains





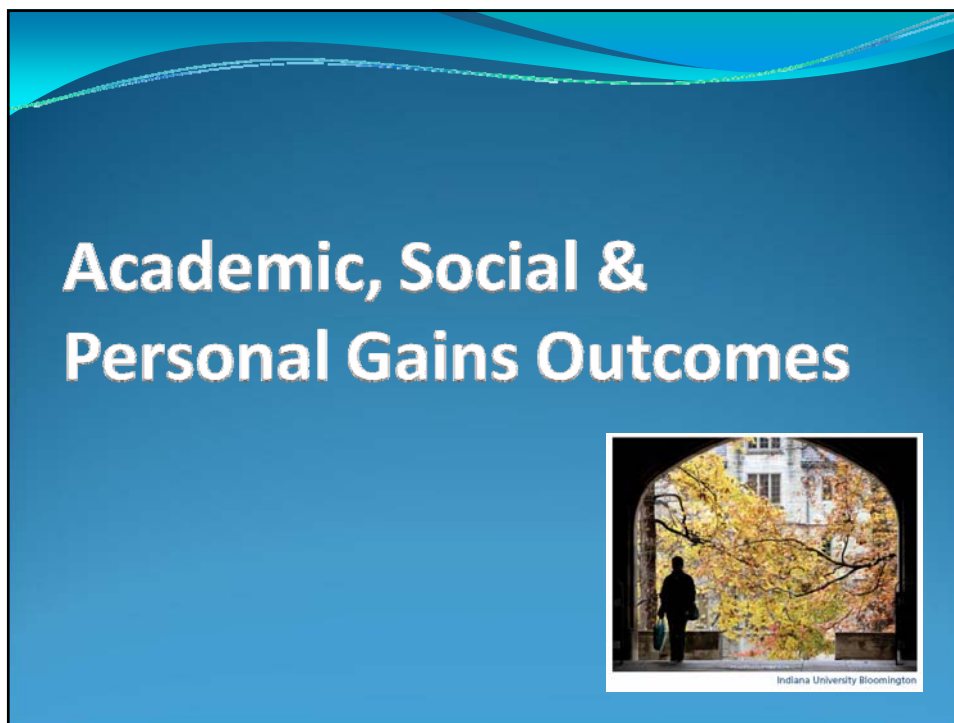
Most Common LC Structures

	Classes Reserved for LC Students	Majority of classes Taken in LC	Course discussion group	Work integrated across classes	Residential	Peer Advisor	Outside Activities
LC 1: 79 students							
LC 2: 50 students			X				
LC 3: 42 students			X	X			
LC 4: 40 students	X						
LC 5: 34 students	X		X	X		X	X
LC 6: 30 students			X			X	
LC 7: 30 students		X	X				
LC 8: 29 students		X	X				X
LC 9: 26 students						X	
LC 10: 26 students	X		X	X	X	X	X

How Learning Communities Affect
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Most Common LC Structures

STRUCTURES	Classes Reserved for LC Students	Majority of classes Taken in LC	Course discussion group	Work integrated across classes	Residential	Peer Advisor	Outside Activities
LC 1: 79 students			Simple				
LC 2: 50 students			Discussion Group				
LC 3: 42 students			Discussion Group & Integrative Work				
LC 4: 40 students	X		Exclusive				
LC 5: 34 students	X		Complex			X	X



How Learning Communities Affect
Academic, Social, and Personal Gains

Scale 1: General Education

To what extent has your experience in this program contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in each of the following areas?	Mean	% Reporting Significant Contribution
General Education Scale (Cronbach Alpha= .93)	24.7	
Acquiring a broad general education	4.2	46%
Writing clearly and effectively	4.0	42%
Speaking clearly and effectively	4.0	42%
Thinking critically and analytically	4.3	52%
Analyzing quantitative problems	3.9	40%
Learning effectively on your own	4.2	47%

*Response values: 1=Not at all to 6=Very much; Scale range 6 – 36.
Significant contribution = Response of 5 or 6
N= ~ 1,200*

Scale 2: Understand Self & Others

To what extent has your experience in this program contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in each of the following areas?	Mean	% Reporting Significant Contribution
Understanding Self & Others Scale (Cronbach Alpha= .89)	12.4	
Understanding yourself	4.2	47%
Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds	4.1	45%
Developing a personal code of values and ethics	4.0	43%

*Response values: 1=Not at all to 6=Very much; Scale range 3 – 18.
Significant contribution = Response of 5 or 6
N= ~ 1,200*

Scale 3: Social Life

To what extent did your participation in this program...	Mean	% Reporting Significant Contribution
Social Life Scale (Cronbach Alpha= .88)	13.1	
Opportunities for you to interact socially with other students	4.6	58%
Helped you feel a part of the greater campus community	4.2	48%
Helped you develop a group of close friends	4.3	52%

*Response values: 1=Not at all to 6=Very much; Scale range 3 - 18.
Significant contribution = Response of 5 or 6
N= ~ 1,200*

Results: How Outcomes Relate to Features & Structures




LC Outcome Comparison By Structure

Scale Comparisons	General Education	Understanding Self & Others	Social Life
LC 1: Simple	22	11	11
LC 2: Discussion Group	25	13	13
LC 3: Discussion Group & Integrative Work	26	13	13
LC 4: Exclusive	21	9	10
LC 5: Complex	29	14	15

LC Outcome Comparison By Structure

Scale Comparisons	General Education	Understanding Self & Others	Social Life
LC 1: Simple	22	11	11
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LC 5: Complex	29	14	15



LC Features & 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			++

- ### Implications
- Integrating content across courses promotes student gains
 - Making the LC experience exclusive may hinder gains
 - More features the better, except for “exclusivity”
 - Select features based on goals/mission of LC & institution

Limitations

- Preliminary analyses
- Larger sample needed for further analyses
- Confirmation of results needed
- Additional features??

Discussion & Questions

- What results were surprising?
- Confirmed your experiences?
- Good ideas to share? How have these features and structures worked on your campus?
- What additional program features should be included in future research?
- Other thoughts?

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