

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESIDENTIAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES AND STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

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Residential learning communities (RLCs) are residence hall environments designed to deliver academic and social benefits. For decades, RLCs have been touted as an effective means to increase student success. Yet, substantial changes in campus housing along with an increasingly diverse student population have led to new questions about the impact of living on campus and the benefits of RLCs in particular. We found that RLCs continue to positively influence an array of educational outcomes with small, non-trivial effects. Additionally, RLCs appear to work by promoting student engagement within students' place of residence.

SUMMARY

This study provides insight into the relationships between RLC participation, engagement, and perceived gains in learning re-affirming many previous findings but on a multi-institutional scale with over 21,000 first-year (68%) and sophomore (32%) students who lived on campus at the 76 institutions. Of these students, 17% participated in an RLC, defined as a residential program where students take at least one class together and attend common educational or social activities.



Over half of RLC participants attended a social or co-curricular activity where they lived, compared with only about a third of their peers



Half of RLC participants were more likely to collaborate on a project or study with peers in a RLC compared to one-third of non-participants



About 1 in 4 RLC participants met with a faculty member in their place of residence while only 1 in 10 non-participants did so

How can housing professionals continue to promote and improve these experiences?

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROFESSIONALS

Residential learning communities continue to be an important practice for student success, and efforts to expand their availability are encouraged. However, we identified room to optimize these experiences at the granular level. For example, while RLC participants attended more diversity-related events than their on-campus peers, such attendance did not translate to a meaningful increase in engagement with diverse others. Perhaps instituting a talk-back or reflection component to diversity-related events could prompt students to be more engaged. For the full paper, visit: go.iu.edu/29Ky