LIVING-LEARNING COMMUNITY DESIGN FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES

THAT OFFER STUDENT HOUSING

by

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ABSTRACT

Living-learning communities (LLCs) are college-sponsored initiatives geared towards the residential members who chose to reside in student housing. These specialized residential entities provide students with opportunities to participate in a common curriculum with other members of the community with an educational focus. The residential community is a structured environment designed to meet the needs of the student by offering a nurturing environment predicated on developing relationships with peers, faculty, and staff. The shared academic endeavor and structured activities create opportunities for the student to develop social skills and enhance their academic acumen.

This study focuses on several of the most successful practices implemented in higher education in the areas of student persistence, retention, and graduation. The concepts and constructs needed to design an LLC are discussed by this study constitute the tools for a successful residential community. The study also provides information on how to successfully implement a living-learning initiative, with a suggestive model for community colleges with residential housing. The suggestive model has not been tested in a residential setting but can be used as a guide for a housing entity considering implementing a residential community.

The tools suggested in this study encourage the buy-in of several internal institutional stakeholders (housing office, faculty, and engaged student members). The information provided in the study emphasizes the importance of the following elements that are essential for student success as it pertain to LLCs: successful transition to the

institution, relationship with peers in the residential setting, social skills development, service learning component, utilization of the Student Development Theory, creation of a personal development plan, enhancement of leadership skills, and successful completion of the academic endeavor (student success). The eight modules associated with the suggestive model are based on successful learning community practices that have been implemented in higher education.

DEDICATION

First and foremost, I would like to thank God for answering prayers in my academic and personal life. Without God, none of this journey would have ever been possible. I also would like to thank my family (Anna, MJ, and Ava) for providing me with the inspiration needed to complete this educational journey. I appreciate the support all of you have given me over the last three years as I worked on assignments or traveled on the weekend for class; I dedicate this dissertation to you.

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Introduction to the Study

The educational system in the United States has been rapidly changing due to the demands of internal and external factors such as access to education, increased completion rates, and training the workforce with highly skilled employees. Myran (2009, p. 3) states that, due to the increased demands on the educational system, community colleges are inventing new ways to prepare the most underprepared and underserved groups for success. One strategy that can be implemented by community colleges that offer residential housing is a Living-Learning Community (LLC). LLCs are specialized residential areas within higher education institutions that are dedicated to a student's personal and academic success. This study focuses on the design of an LLC in a residential facility located on a community college campus, the support needed for successful implementation of the program, and how those who are members of an LLC tend to perform better in the areas of persistence, retention, and completion of a college degree than peers who are not members of the community.

This research will address the strategies used in LLCs and how those strategies contribute to the persistence, retention, and graduation rates of the institutions offering LLCs. According to Rogge and Rohli (2012), LLCs tend to focus primarily on first-year students, for several heuristic and practical reasons. Several of the reasons why students chose to reside in LLCs are the following: discussion of academic and career issues with

peers, course-related faculty interaction, supportive academic and social climate, and sense of belonging due to the engagement in the community (Rogge & Rohli, 2012).

LLCs offer participants the opportunity to engage in learning outside of the traditional academic setting, whereby students engage in structured and unstructured activities that assist them in growing in the areas of self-efficacy and independent thinking (Rogge & Rohli, 2012). Students choose to participate in these specialized residential communities for a myriad of reasons, one of which is the opportunity to be part of a community that will help them to develop in the areas of leadership, personal growth, and academic success. Students who are involved in LLCs have a strong potential for academic success. LLCs allow their members to become involved in activities and conversations that take the member beyond the academic boundaries of the classroom and create an opportunity for greater engagement in the higher education institution. The educational benefit for the LLC member can vary from expanded discussion occurring outside the classroom setting to learning about the culture of another individual.

In 1986, the research conducted by McMillan and Chavis (1986, p. 15) focused on the elements that helped identify the term community. The researchers found that individuals who are involved in a community are attracted to developing and strengthening the social fabric, which is essential for community development. The elements identified were membership, influence, and integration/fulfillment of needs.

Membership has an integral role in developing the individuals who are residing in the specialized residential community. Individuals who reside in the specialized residential community do so for the reason of being connected to others who are

committed to the ideologies, values, and opportunities that make up the community. Membership allows persons to be part of a society of individuals that are striving for advancement and achievement of individual goals, which can be accomplished through the support system that is created by the unity of the community (McMillan and Chavis, 1986).

The development of community within the LLC is integral to helping members develop the tools, such as tutoring, mentoring, and counseling, to lead others in the areas of cohesiveness and conformity. *Cohesiveness* and *conformity* are terms that define the behavior of the community and help identify its leaders. The leaders of the community are those members who not only care about accomplishing the objectives/goals of the community but also care about the feelings of others associated with the group. According to McMillan and Chavis (1986), the influence and the direction of the community is a two-way street, whereby leaders have the opportunity to assert authority over others but also have others assert authority over the perceived leader(s). When others have the chance to demonstrate leadership in the group, the community can grow, because all members feel connected to the objective through participation in specialized events and activities.

Fulfillment of needs is the last essential component needed for a successful community. A successful community is made up of members that feel that their needs will be met through involvement and greater association with the environment. The environment of the community provides the member with the tools and support needed to fulfill their desires and pleasures, which is pertinent for members to feel a sense of belonging and cohesiveness within the group. When members feel connected to the

community, the relationship between all vested parties associated with the community is strengthened. Through the camaraderie among the members created by active participation in activities, the personal needs of members are fulfilled, and those needs are in alignment with the values and principles that define a successful community.

LLCs help create an environment that encourages stronger academic achievement in the classroom for their participants and has a positive, significant effect on students who are involved with the community (Inkelas, Longerbeam, & Vogt, 2006a). Students who are members of LLCs tend to perform better scholastically due, in part, to the peer relationships that are created as a result of the community. The positive morale created within the community motivates the residential learner to reach his/her academic goals through active engagement and encouragement that produces personal and academic satisfaction. When learners feel that they are supported socially and academically, the individual is helped in the area of social and cognitive development, which is crucial if the learner is going to be successful in academic endeavors.

Jaffee (2004) identified four factors that are essential for freshman learning communities: a deeper understanding of course material, discussion of the subject matter with peers, active engagement in education, and satisfaction with the quality of education. When students are actively engaged in a specialized learning community based on educational subject matter, students are more likely to engage in conversation about the subject outside of the structured classroom environment. Interaction with other peers in discussing material outside of the classroom helps the learner better understand the subject matter, increasing the student's comprehension of the academic course material. Interacting with peers enrolled in the same course helps all parties that are part

of the academic process to understand the material, which is a win-win for all engaged learners who are involved in the discussion. When individuals are exposed to content outside of a formal structure, they are provided an opportunity for a richer educational experience, improving the learning that is encouraged and promoted through active participation in the LLC.

Statement of the Problem

In 2008, the College Board Commission on Access, Admission, and Success in higher education issued an action agenda to increase the number of Americans with college credentials by 2025 (Hughes, 2012). To help address this action agenda, all institutions are encouraged to implement academic initiatives to help meet the goal that 55% of Americans between the ages of 25 to 35 will have educational credentials beyond the secondary educational level by 2025. Due to the urgency of this goal, colleges and universities receiving federal funding may be impacted by federal legislation that will tie governmental funding to academic completion initiatives. Community colleges, as well as four-year institutions, are implementing academic initiatives as part of their curriculum to meet the completion agenda goals by 2025. Implementation of LLCs on community college campuses that offer student housing is one initiative that will help students to achieve the educational competencies needed for meeting the College's Board goal. These specialized housing communities can provide the tools and resources needed for completion of educational credentials in higher education. LLCs are prevalent at four-year colleges and universities; however, very few community colleges offer student housing with living-learning communities. To address the "gap in knowledge" in this

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area of higher education, this research focuses on the lack of LLCs in community college settings and discusses the benefits these specialized communities offer for advancing institutional goals in the areas of persistence, retention, and graduation.

LLCs are residential-based communities provided by higher education institutions; individuals who reside there are encouraged to engage and interact with members of a specialized residential group. According to Jessup-Anger and Wawrzynski (2010), residential communities help students to achieve their goals by providing an educational-based environment that focuses on achieving goals that lead to academic success. The academic success of the learning community is based on the relationship between the engagement of residential cohort members and their interaction with faculty. Students who tend to engage in dialogue with faculty and are active contributors to the LLC tend to perform better than students who do not actively engage with faculty outside of the academic setting. The relationship and rapport established between the faculty and students are crucial in helping students understand course material. Students who have established rapport with a faculty member tend to fare better academically than those who have not; the relationship with the faculty member is closely linked to student success in the classroom (Jessup-Anger & Wawrzynski, 2010). Interaction with faculty is one of the essential components for an LLC; the community prides itself on interacting with members of an academic discipline and creating a relationship that extends beyond the traditional academic setting (Jessup-Anger & Wawryznski, 2010).

The dialogue that occurs outside the traditional academic setting is important in advancing the student's educational knowledge base, as well as in establishing rapport with an educator committed to helping the learner achieve his/her educational goals.

LLCs are educational cohorts in a residential setting that provide members with the opportunity to engage in active dialogue about a particular subject matter. According to Ford and Vaughn (2011), educational cohorts provide the foundation and structure not only for student members to collaborate with faculty members at the institution but also to encourage students to engage with each other, which enhances camaraderie among members. Social skills, such as verbal communication, are developed through involvement in the specialized community, which is one of the founding principles of a successful LLC. The research provides information on how to design an LLC for any community college that offers residential housing. Institutional support of LLCs will allow faculty and staff to work with a cohort of students by providing tools such as tutoring, mentoring, and counseling to aid the residential learner. Residential learners will be aided in their pursuit of knowledge by interacting with institutional members and peers in the community who are taking the same classes. LLCs assist the various entities within the institution in identifying the needs of the student learner in the residential community and focusing on outcomes that will lead to academic and personal success. The definition of success for the student varies from learner to learner, but the supports that aid the learner are crucial for educational attainment and accomplishment of the initiatives of the community. Beaulieu, Helman, Jessup-Anger, Stolz, and Wawrzynski (2009) stated that living-learning communities are designed to assist participants in the area of academics and social engagement.

Purpose of the Study

The study's purpose is to provide a framework for a residential program that can be implemented on any community college campus, which will aid the residential population in the areas of persistence, retention, and completion of graduation requirements. According to research conducted by Inkelas, Soldner, Longerbeam, and Leonard (2008), students who are part of living-learning communities tend to have higher grade point averages, stronger peer relationships, and better interaction with faculty. This study focuses on the design of an LLC in a residential facility, the supports needed for successful implementation of the program, and how those who are members of LLCs perform slightly better in the areas of persistence, retention, and completion than peers who are not members of the community.

Research has been conducted quantitatively and qualitatively (e.g., Akens, 2002; Jessup-Anger & Wawrzynski, 2010) on the impact and value of LLCs in the four-year institutional residential setting. However, to date, limited research has been conducted on the value and impact of LLCs in community college environments. This research focuses on the design of an LLC on community college campuses that offer student housing, as well as the educational constructs needed to successfully design and implement an LLC program.

The second focus is on the objectives needed to successfully implement an LLC in a community college setting that may or may not have all the necessary resources for an effective living-learning environment. Research on LLCs in four-year institutions has focused on a cohort model or initiatives that were faculty-led in collaboration with a residential life facility with multiple housing communities. This research will focus on

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how the Office of Residential Life, in partnership with the offices of tutoring, academic advising, and faculty collaboration, can accomplish the outcomes needed to implement an LLC program.

The third focus of this study addresses the impact that LLCs have on the persistence, retention, and graduation rates of members who were active participants of the community, in comparison to non-LLC members. This study will provide insight on what initiatives have a profound impact on the metrics that contribute to student success. In addition, we will discuss best practices for accomplishing the goal of higher persistence, retention, and graduation rates for participating members of the LLC program.

Significance of the Study

The state of Michigan has 28 community colleges; only six offer housing for their student learners. According to data from the Chronicle of Higher Education College Completion microsite (n.d.), only 19.4% of community college students graduate within a three-year period from Michigan community colleges. A study conducted by the University of Central Florida states that students who reside in institutional-offered housing tend to fare better academically and have a higher rate of persisting and graduating, due to support offered through on-campus housing (Moses, 2013).

This study will provide insight in the area of LLCs for community colleges that offer student housing and will discuss how the creation of these specialized residential communities aid the institution in the areas of persistence, retention, and graduation initiatives. Beaulieu et al. (2009) stated that participation in living-learning communities

has resulted in a significant impact on members' grades, due to the many opportunities for engagement through interaction with peers and faculty and the support of community members. LLCs also have a positive effect on social integration, which is vital for academic success and personal relationships outside the classroom (Beaulieu et al., 2009). Having opportunities for academic engagement and personal relationships is a contributing factor in determining if a student chooses to persist from one year to the next. The creation of LLCs on community college campuses that offer student housing is pivotal in ensuring that residential learners have the ability to progress from college admittance to completion of degree/certificate requirements.

This specialized residential program is only a small part of the work done in the development and implementation of LLCs for higher education institutions; however, the focus of this work is on community colleges that offer student housing. The goals of the program will be achieved through collaboration of faculty members and students as they actively participate in the LLCs' activities and programs. The study will demonstrate how to create a program to increase the number of LLC members who persist from year to year and have enhanced or improved social skills.

Primary Research Questions

The primary research question of this study was:

- How effective are living-learning communities in residential facilities in higher education in relation to student persistence, retention, and graduation?

The secondary questions of this study were:

- What factors contribute to living-learning community members' academic success?

- What impact do living-learning communities have on students' social and interpersonal skills?

- What are the persistence, retention, and graduation rates for students who participate in LLCs?

Hypotheses

The hypothesis of this study will help determine how effective LLCs are in ensuring that their members persist at a college from one semester to the next until they have the educational credentials needed for graduation. This study will evaluate the variables that contribute to the LLC, such as study groups, student life involvement, and the member's engagement with faculty/staff involved with the community. The study will demonstrate how those who are members of the LLC are more likely to be retained and persist at the institution and are more socially engaged at the college than non-members of the LLC.

Assumptions

- LLC students tend to perform better scholastically in the classroom than students who are not members of the specialized residential community.

- LLC students tend to have greater rapport with faculty, which leads to greater satisfaction with classroom instruction, than students who are not members of the specialized residential community.

- LLC students tend to have greater social interaction with peers of the specialized community than students who are not members of the specialized residential community.

- LLC students tend to persist at the institution at higher rates than students who are not members of the specialized residential community.

- LLC students tend to have a higher retention rate than students who are not members of the specialized residential community.

- LLC students tend to have a higher graduation rate than students who are not members of the specialized residential community.

- LLC students tend to be more engaged in college activities and programs than students who are not members of the specialized residential community.

- Community colleges that offer student housing will invest in LLCs for the student population that chooses to reside on campus.

Limitations

- Not all community colleges offer residential housing for the student population that attends the college.

- Community colleges that offer housing do not have to offer a living-learning community option or make it a requirement for their residential students to reside in the community.

- The LLC model for community colleges that offer student housing has not been tested in a residential setting.

- The study is a sampling of the best practices in higher education that assist colleges in increasing the retention, persistence, and graduation rates.

- Membership in the LLC program is voluntary for the student participant.

Definition of Terms

Cohort: Group of students that are members of a specific educational sect that voluntarily or involuntarily participate in an educational study based on class status or residential community.

First Time in College (FTIC): An individual who has never attended or enrolled in an institution of higher education.

Graduation Rate: The rate determined by students who complete their educational requirements in 3 years or less for a two year certificate or degree program at a community college.

Interpersonal Skills: Skills that are used by individuals to communicate with other individuals in a formal or informal setting.

Living-Learning Community (LLC): Residential community in college-designated housing for students residing on a particular floor or facility who are taking a specific course with other members in the community.

Loco Parentis: An individual who acts as the substitute parent, or an alternative guardian for a student in the collegiate setting.

Persistence Rate: Continued academic progress in an institution from one academic year to the next academic year.

Retention Rate: A student's continued enrollment in an institution from one academic semester to the next academic semester.

Summary

This study focuses on the resources needed to implement an LLC in a community college setting that offers residential housing for students wishing to reside on campus. The research project will demonstrate that students who reside in LLCs tend to have higher grade point averages and persist at the institution longer than students who are non-members of the specialized community. This research explored the camaraderie created among members who are participants of these specialized communities, and how LLCs assisted the members in the area of persistence, retention, and graduation. The success of the participant who is a member of the specialized community is grounded in the student's own motivation for educational success, along with the establishment of rapport with faculty. Establishing rapport with faculty provides the participant of the LLC additional educational support and motivation, which is essential for retention and persistence at the institution. Students that have a favorable rapport with their respective faculty are likely to be more engaged in the classroom instruction than persons who do not interact with faculty. Faculty engagement with students who are members of the specialized community is crucial in establishing the outcomes of the LLC, in addition to helping LLC members to achieve their personal and academic goals while residing in the community. The success of individuals who are members of the specialized community is

predicated on the member's needs being met in the area of membership, influence, and

fulfillment of personal and community needs.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Background of Living-Learning Communities

Living-learning communities are dedicated housing programs in which members of a specialized cohort with similar academic, personal, or professional goals reside together in an educational setting. These members use the similarities in their program requirements to assist each other in the pursuit of their respective academic goals. These specialized living communities help students not only in the area of academic attainment, but also in the area of personal growth outside the classroom environment. Rogge and Rohli (2012) stated that LLCs at Louisiana State University (LSU) are defined as communities of students who reside in the same residence hall as other students who are enrolled in one class or several classes together. Being enrolled in similar courses with individuals who reside in a particular residence hall offers members an opportunity for engagement outside of the classroom. Students also have the opportunity to study course material together in preparation for the same class or to engage in dialogue unrelated to the course material. Purdie and Rosser (2011) stated that one of the reasons members of living-learning communities tend to have higher retention rates in college from semester to semester is due to the interaction among members who share a common goal of academic persistence at the institution. The camaraderie and support created by members of the community provides educational and peer support, which is the basis of a successful LLC program.

In 1998, the Boyer Commission on Educating Undergraduates in the Research University released a report identifying 10 strategies that were essential to changing the outlook of undergraduate education for research colleges and universities. These 10 strategies were the following: make research-based learning the standard, construct an inquiry-based freshman year, build on the freshman foundation, remove barriers to interdisciplinary education, link communication skills and course work, use information technology creatively, culminate with a capstone experience, educate graduate students as apprentice teachers, change faculty reward systems, and cultivate a sense of community.

The Boyer Commission on Educating Undergraduates in the Research University (1998) encouraged cultivating a sense of community within the institution by making several recommendations. Research universities should foster a community of learners. Large universities must find ways to create a sense of place to help students develop small communities within the larger whole. Community colleges are entities in higher education that must adapt to the ever-changing needs of their students by implementing strategies designed for learner success.

The Boyer Commission on Educating Undergraduates in the Research University (1998) introduced a newer educational model that should be implemented in the U.S. educational system to enhance the baccalaureate experience for undergraduates. The model that was proposed by the Boyer report emphasized the importance of the symbiotic relationship between all the participants in university learning by creating a diverse experience that includes a degree of independence and self-reliance, and one in which the student seeks stimulation more than security. This type of experience is currently being

replicated by U.S. higher education institutions that offer residential facilities with a living-learning component.

History of Living-Learning Communities

Kellogg (2000) stated that the earliest learning community can be traced back to 1927 when Alexander Meiklejohn formed the two-year Experimental College at the University of Wisconsin. The design of the learning community that was implemented by Meiklejohn was founded on the premise that faculty and students would read Greek literature in the first year of the program and compare that information to American literature in the second year. During the summer between the first and second year of the program, students were required to write a paper about their thoughts on the literature they studied and discussion with faculty (Kellogg, 2000). This program lasted only six years but helped establish the foundation for learning communities' principles in use at higher education institutions today.

Kellogg (2000) states that there are five types of learning communities being utilized in higher education, which are the following:

1. *Linked Courses* - This model links a cohort of students with two common courses. One course is typically content-based (e.g., science, math) and the other is an application course (e.g., writing, speech). Faculty who choose to participate in linked courses have the opportunity to work together with other faculty or independently to coordinate assignments for students. This model encourages students to focus on the shared experience of the courses with other members of the cohort.

2. *Learning Clusters* - The Learning Cluster Model focuses on students engaging in three or more courses together in a cohort model that correlates with the participating students' course load. Participants of learning clusters tend to focus on a common theme in collaboration with three or four faculty members who work jointly on the initiatives of the program. Participants of the learning cluster

model tend to engage in similar activities, which range from a planned event or scheduled reading to a routine seminar about their shared experience.

3. *Freshman Interest Groups (FIGs)* - Freshman Interest Groups are freshman-based courses that link participants with a common theme and are designed for large universities or higher education institutions. FIGs are focused around academic majors and have an advising component where freshman transition issues are discussed. FIGs are led by a peer advisor, with minimal faculty participation. Even though faculty are not active participants in the initiative, they are encouraged to take part in weekly seminars and social events hosted by the peer advisor.

4. *Federated Learning Communities* - This model is based on a cohort of students who take three theme-based courses in addition to a three-credit seminar taught by a Master Learner. The Master Learner is a professor from a different discipline who attends the courses and fulfills all the requirements of the classes along with the students. The Master Learner leads the seminar and helps students in synthesizing and exploring the opinions and points of view of other students enrolled in the three courses.

5. *Coordinated Studies* - In Coordinated Studies, faculty and students participate in full-time active learning based on an interdisciplinary theme, which ranges from broad to narrow in scope. The curriculum of this type of program can last from a semester to a year, and faculty have complete control of the course design and outcomes. Coordinated Studies allows students to take 16 credits per semester, and the courses are team-taught by several faculty members in set blocks each week.

Ebbers and Lenning (1999) identified four categories of student learning communities that are prevalent in higher education: curricular learning communities, classroom learning communities, residential learning communities, and student-type learning communities. *Curricular learning communities* are defined as communities that focus on the linking of course subjects among cohorts in an effort to enhance a student's intellectual learning and interaction with faculty. *Classroom learning communities* are defined as communities that spotlight the importance of engaging the learner through conversation and activities in the classroom environment, focusing on student interaction to maximize classroom success. *Residential learning communities* are specialized

communities that concentrate on implementing programs that are dedicated to improving

students' involvement in their educational pursuits. *Student-type learning communities*

are concentrated on promoting student learning through structured groups. Within the

categories identified by Ebbers and Lenning, two dimensions were acknowledged that are

pertinent for higher education learning communities: primary membership and primary

form of interaction. Primary membership focuses on the differences of the characteristics

unique to the makeup of the group members that are part of the group. Primary form of

interaction emphasizes the contact that the members of the specialized group have with

each other, which ranges from direct physical interaction to virtual interaction to non-

direct interaction composed of written or other correspondence within the educational

setting.

Benefits of Living-Learning Communities

Mishra (2012) stated that learning community programs can be used to assist at-

risk students in improving their academic performance by developing their skills in the

areas essential to academic success. The benefit of LLCs is that they allow students and

faculty to work together in a structured environment to help students become more

engaged and involved in the academic subject matter. In addition to students'

engagement with the course content, they are exposed to peers who are members of the

specialized community. The collaboration and discussion with peers in the community

create opportunities for students to become more versed in the founding principles of

LLCs: common curriculum, nurturing environment, developing relationships, shared

academic endeavor, and structured activities.

Common Curriculum

LLCs allow members to participate in a common curriculum of a subject matter inside and outside of the classroom environment. A common curriculum establishes a structure for the student learner to be successful in an academic course designed by faculty (Kellogg, 2000; Mishra, 2012). Students benefit from a common curriculum when they can become immersed in the course material due to their relationship with staff as a result of the program. Kuh and Zhao (2004) stated that most learning communities incorporate active and collaborative learning opportunities and promote involvement in complementary and active activities that extend beyond the classroom.

The design of the LLC is to encourage students to expand their academic knowledge beyond the classroom by involving members of the community in conversation with faculty about course content. Faculty interaction with members in the residential setting is important to student success because it allows for active, mutual dialogue based on the course content. Golde and Pribbenow (2000) suggested that faculty participation in a residential learning community represents an opportunity to act in accordance with beliefs about interdisciplinary and innovative education. Such faculty involvement allows faculty to be innovative in generating an educational experience that can impact the learner through course content and non-academic discussions. Inkelas et al. (2006b) contended that those who are members of living-learning programs demonstrate stronger academic achievement, which has positive and significant effects on student learning outcomes. Students involved with the community tend to have higher grade point averages and closer relationships with faculty members affiliated with the program. La Vine and Mitchell (2006) noted that students who resided in a living community reported that the community assisted them socially and academically,

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resulting in a positive first-year experience. This positive experience also helped students to develop relationships with faculty associated with the program. The stronger the relationship with the faculty, the more likely that students will be interested in the subject matter and persist at the institution.

Nurturing Environment

The nurturing environment that LLCs offer students is a benefit that is essential to members' academic and social success at the institution. Abraham Maslow identified eight levels in his Hierarchy of Needs for individuals: physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness and love needs, esteem needs, need to know and understand, aesthetic needs, self-actualization, and transcendence in reference to human behavior and motivation (Figure 1; Huitt, 2007). Movement through each of the various levels of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs must take place before an individual is able to advance to the next higher level. The key for optimization in meeting the needs, as stated by Maslow, is for the individual to take the necessary steps to detect and remedy any deficiency as it pertains to motivation and basic needs.
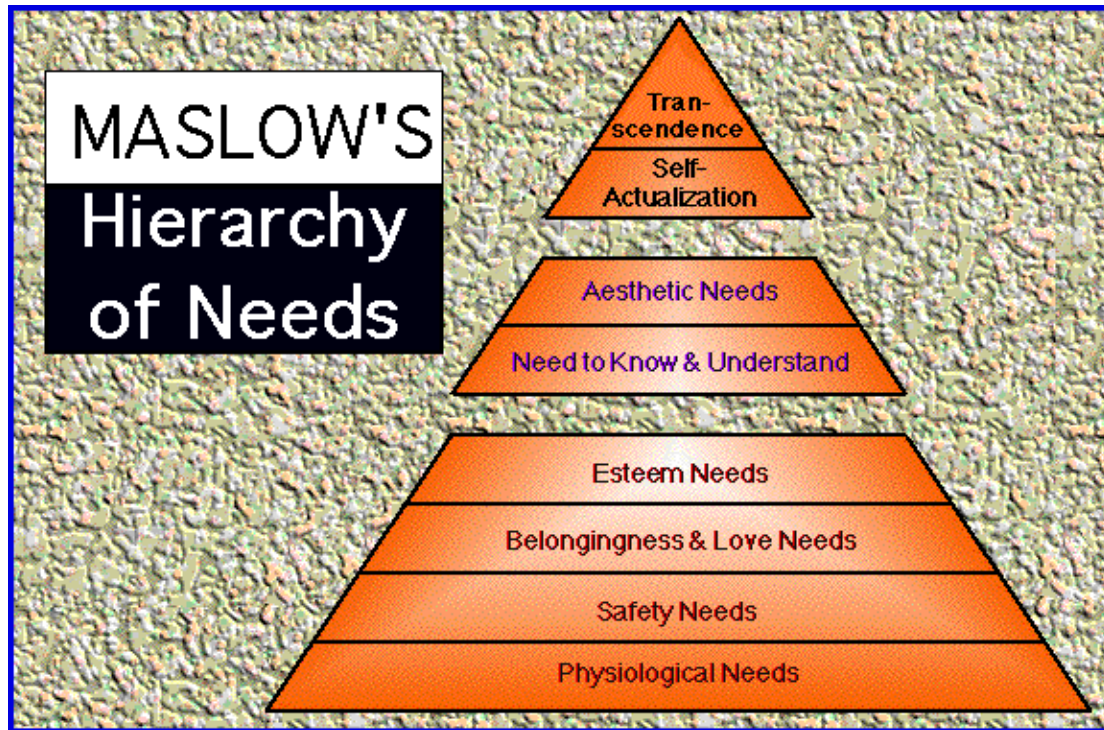
Figure 1. Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Huitt, 2007).

The premise of having physiological needs met first is crucial for human survival and necessary to sustain life. Individuals who reside in LLCs have their physiological needs met through interaction with peers within the community by engaging in activities, such as active conversation with faculty, staff, or peers in or outside the residential facility. In addition to having their psychological needs met through interaction with faculty and other peers in the community, those who are members are able to have conversations with their peers, which is important for academic and social success at the institution. Students rely on the camaraderie formed through the LLCs to help develop competencies in areas where the student is deficient, such as physiological needs.

In reference to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, the safety needs of an individual must be met to lead the individual through the next sequence of steps toward

interdependence as a successful member of society. LLCs provide their members with housing, as well as offering out-of-classroom experiences to aid learners in academic and social engagement. The residential environment provides the LLC member a community with other members who are striving to meet the same needs, such as housing, an essential necessity of a learning community. In addition to meeting housing needs, the community delivers the emotional supports needed for its members to feel secure in the designated housing setting.

The third level in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is belongingness and sense of love. LLCs offer specialized housing for their members to reside in a community with other members, delivering opportunities for members to have a sense of belongingness and to feel valued by other members. Downey, Frost, Holland, Schultz, and Strom (2010) stated that learning in a broader context both provides students with the opportunity to use their developing skills and knowledge in real-life situations and also promotes community (p. 44). The activities associated with involvement in the learning community allow members to feel part of a group that focuses on providing the tools needed for belongingness and acceptance by members. Schroeder (2002) suggested that collaborative learning and residence learning communities replace internalized parental control with internalized peer support (p. 7). Through participation and membership, LLC members have the opportunity to advance to another level toward self-actualization in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Splichal (2007) stated that a high point of learning communities is the sense of belonging and the interpersonal connections that develop between students and faculty.

The fourth level as it relates to the highest achievement level of transcendence is self-esteem. LLCs provide their members with opportunities to engage, helping students to develop socially and to improve self-esteem. Self-esteem is demonstrated as learners have confidence in themselves and others who share a vested interest in the community. The members' involvement in activities and programs associated with the community helps them gain confidence in their respective abilities, strengthening self-esteem, which is essential for success in the community and in their academic pursuits.

The fifth level of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is the need to know and understand, which means that the individual will evolve in increasing his or her cognitive thinking skills. Specialized learning communities challenge their members to expand their knowledge beyond the classroom into the living community by engaging in thought-provoking conversations that increase their knowledge in a subject area. Advancing one's knowledge is encouraged by the community, which provides internal supports to ensure that the student is developing socially and academically within the institution. Obtaining academic and non-academic knowledge helps the student gain the proficiencies needed to advance to the next stage of Maslow's Hierarchy: aesthetic needs.

The sixth step of Maslow's Hierarchy involves the aesthetic needs, which focus on imagery associated with beauty or an environmental stimulus that the individual finds aesthetically pleasing. Aesthetic needs are relevant to LLCs because members of the community may identify with beautiful things of the world, such as art, music, or nature. LLCs in higher educational settings may expose students to more of the fine arts than they would encounter outside of the traditional academic classroom setting. LLC

members who identify with such beauty may acquire a greater feeling of intimacy within themselves, in addition to an enhanced relationship with things of beauty.

The need for self-actualization, the seventh step toward the goal of achieving transcendence, is fulfilled when individuals feel they are at their best in their respective abilities and strive to be the best representative of themselves. Self-actualization is pivotal in assisting members of LLCs to grow and develop personally. Through its programs, activities, and interactions with others, an LLC offers members the opportunity for personal growth. The LLC encourages its members to develop and expand their skills beyond the classroom environment. The personal growth that the student experiences is enhanced by conversations with peers and faculty, in addition to the member's personal drive for establishing and achieving his or her goal.

Maslow's last need of transcendence addresses an individual's need to develop feelings of integrity, essential in advancing personal spiritual, mental, and physical growth. Residential learning communities encourage members to develop in all facets of their being, helping learners to become well-oriented, productive, and contributing members of society, due, in part, to their participation in the community. By advancing through Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, LLC members not only grow spiritually, mentally, and physically, but they also help others in the community and society to reach their personal goals.

Developing Relationships

LLCs, through the design of the program, create opportunities for students to enhance their relationships with faculty, in addition to befriending peers who are members of the community. Inkelas, Kenyon, and Soldner (2007) stated that grouping

students with similar interests for the purpose of enhancing a valued outcome is, at face

value, desirable. Individuals who choose to reside in the community and participate in

activities with other members tend to form a bond based on the living and academic

components of the program. Through interaction with peers and faculty members,

friendships are developed, which is conducive for success and retention of participants in

the LLC program. Brower, Carlson-Dakes, and Barger (2007) introduced several

concepts that are critical for the development of a learning community (Table 1).

Table 1: Outcomes of Successful Learning Communities

Outcome	Explanation	Examples of programs and activities
Externalized Public Expressions (shared responsibility and contribution)	• LC members feel responsible for and commit to accomplishing the mission and goals of the community. • LC members feel responsible for helping other members in their learning. • LC members form reciprocal relationships, giving to and receiving from the LC. • LC members contribute to the generation of community "products." • The organization of the LC is non-hierarchical.	• Rotating roles (i.e., voluntarily taking on roles that help to advance the learning community; members "rotate" through various roles and responsibilities within the LC). • Community "products" are developed and worked on together by a variety of members of the community. • Members develop new friendships, new work relationships, and mutual supports that extend beyond the requirements of the activity or course they are involved in. • Members socialize and engage in work-related activities with each other beyond LC-prescribed activities and environment. • The "work" of the LC (e.g., running activities, presentations to departments) is performed by members beyond the paid staff. • Roles within the LC evolve and new roles are initiated by members. • Activities and products develop and evolve over time based on lessons learned, member input, and member initiative.

Source: Brower et al. (2007, p. 16).

The activities that are part of the learning program are organized in such a way that members are required to interact with each other, which is essential for shared academic learning to take place (Brower et al., 2007). This shared learning produces opportunities for students in the community to develop a common language and dialogue due to the commonalities of being active members in an educational and residential cohort program. The residential component of the program allows members to reside on the same floor, wing, or building as other members, which aids in developing relationships. In addition, the academic design of the program allows members to be enrolled in the same classes or series of classes, which increases the bond between them. McMillan and Chavis (1986) stated that because of the shared emotional connection through commitment, those housed in the community will create a bond based on shared history, common places, and similar experiences.

Shared Academic Endeavor

LLCs enable their members to engage in a shared academic experience based on a common class or core of classes in which each member of the program participates. Ambrose, Hauschild, and Ruppe (2008) stated that living and learning community involvement helps students to connect with their peers through classroom projects, discussions, and residence hall interactions. Student immersion into the LLC program through the shared academic experience is crucial for relationship-building and enhanced understanding of the course material outside of the traditional classroom environment.

The design of LLCs, allowing members of the community to connect through shared coursework and educational experiences, helps the learner in transitioning through

the institution and in the area of persistence (Ambrose et al., 2008). Learners tend to engage in activities during their tenure at higher educational institutions for several reasons. One reason is to better their life situation through an educational experience via coursework, which results in educational credentials such as certificates, additional training, or a degree. The shared educational linkage of the coursework connecting members of the community is one of the many components needed to enrich participants' scholastic knowledge. Members rely on each other's support as they progress through the shared journey of institutional coursework, which is essential for students' success in the classroom and relationship building in the community.

Structured Activities

The LLC provides structured activities throughout the duration of the program based on the premise of offering students opportunities to interact with faculty and other members in a setting outside of the classroom. Inkelas et al. (2006a) stated that living-learning programs are better at creating environments that facilitate openness to difference than developing analytical skills. Living-learning programs construct opportunities for students to be engaged in social or cultural awareness programs or structured activities that are beneficial for members' growth in self-awareness. LLCs encourage members to be active participants in their residential environment, which can range from interactive discussions to involvement in field activities that contribute to the camaraderie necessary for personal and educational growth in the community.

Kuh and Zhao (2004) stated that the linking of students through ongoing social interactions for a period of time helps them identify and discover their own voice from a learning perspective, enhancing students' social and academic experiences. Activities or

events implemented by LLCs afford members the opportunity to engage with peers, faculty, or other college personnel within a structured environment. Such involvement advances the relationship among members who are involved with the initiative. The structured activities associated with the LLC provide an educational outcome in addition to the traditional pedagogical approach offered through large lecture formats, the standard method for instruction of material (Kuh & Zhao, 2004, p. 118). Structured activities are an active component contributing to members' success in academic, social, and personal development.

Studies of Living-Learning Communities

Bewley (2010) studied the influence that living-learning communities had on students of different ethnic groups and the potential impact these specialized communities had on reducing the academic performance gap of those populations who resided in the educational setting. The research conducted by Bewley concluded that no statistically significant difference was found between academic performance and achievement gap for participants in the residential designed community. The study established that six fundamental factors are critical for success of living-learning communities: a positive relationship between academic affairs and student affairs, faculty involvement in the residence hall, appropriate funding, university buy-in for the specialized program, commitment from campus leadership in support of the initiative, and effective strategies for assessment of the program.

The research conducted by Bewley (2010) also found that students who were members of living-learning communities tended to have higher grade point averages

(GPAs) and higher retention rates than their off-campus counterparts, even though the data were not statistically significant. Bewley's research also found that there was no statistically significant difference between living-learning participants that were part of cohort 2006 and cohort 2008 as it pertains to narrowing the academic achievement gap for ethnic group members that participate in LLCs. The conclusion of Bewley's research was that the achievement gap for those who participated in the community was narrowed based on the variables of living-learning community participation and grade point average.

Kuh and Zhao (2004) conducted research that focused on the impact that learning communities have on members' engagement and achievement in the classroom as opposed to students who are not part of the community. The study found a positive relationship between students who participated in learning communities and the integration of social and academic experiences related to their success at the institution. In addition to this positive relationship, the study results also showed that students who were members of the community had an overall satisfaction with the college experience (p. 124).

Kuh and Zhao's (2004) study also concluded that college seniors who participated in learning communities at some point during college tended to have higher GPAs than seniors who did not participate (p. 124). The research established that participating in a learning community might have significant impact on students' GPAs as they persist through the institution. In addition, individuals who are members of learning communities, when compared to their peers, are more likely to engage with faculty and participate in diversity-related activities (p. 124). Kuh and Zhao's research demonstrated

that students who participate in learning communities are more likely to have higher GPAs, to integrate academic and social experiences, and to have a positive perception of the college environment (p. 133).

Kelsey and Sexton (2003) conducted research with freshmen students studying agriculture who enrolled in the FIT (Freshmen in Transition) program at Oklahoma State University and who were selected to be part of the learning community. The participants in the program applied to and were chosen by the coordinator of the program. Those who were selected had to attend weekly meetings, participate in campus programs, and take part in an eight-week orientation course. The purpose of the study was to demonstrate the impact that learning communities have on GPAs, retention rate, and psychosocial development of the program participants.

The research by Kelsey and Sexton (2003) noted that traditional residence hall students' GPAs were higher than students who were members of the FIT program; other variables that were measured related to academic aptitude were not significantly different. The FIT members had a higher retention rate than traditional residence hall students who resided in the same housing facility. According to Kelsey and Sexton, the latter psychosocial development scores of the participants due to participation in the program decreased significantly for students from earlier testing (p. 27). The research concluded that membership in the FIT program assisted participants in the area of college retention.

Summary

LLCs tend to provide their members many opportunities to grow academically and in social engagement, crucial for individuals who desire to progress toward transcendence, according to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. These specialized communities afford members the opportunity to be engaged in a structured, nurturing environment based on a common curriculum with a shared academic focus. This community design will assist LLC members in developing relationships that will enhance their academic experience. The shared academic experience is the pathway that leads program members to persist and grow academically in their fields of study related to their respective educational goals (certificate, diploma, degree, etc.).

The research also notes that there is no one true definitive method on how to implement an effective LLC program at an institution of higher education due to the various types of communities that can be established. The success of the LLC is based on the outcomes or objectives that are being pursued and is measured related to the success initiative of the program. Successful LLC programs tend to have an outcome or initiative related to student engagement, academic goals, and specifically crafted activities or events. These specialized events and activities allow members to engage in conversations with fellow community members and faculty, which expands their learning beyond the traditional classroom setting.

Kuh and Zhao (2004) and Bewley (2010) concluded that those who are members of LLCs tend to have higher GPAs and persist at the institution in greater numbers than those who are non-participants in the specialized community. The research demonstrates that students who are LLC participants tend to be more engaged and involved in the

college and campus community, which is essential for student's success and satisfaction with their institution. However, Kelsey and Sexton's (2003) research noted that some participants who were members of the specialized community stated that the community did not have any impact on their psychosocial development, success in the community, or academic aptitude within the institution. The discussion in the following chapters will provide solutions on how to successfully implement an LLC, so participants in the program will not have their psychosocial development or academic aptitude, etc. hindered through involvement in the community.

CHAPTER 3: LIVING-LEARNING COMMUNITY PLAN

Design of an LLC for Community Colleges

The purpose of this chapter is to create an LLC model that can be implemented in a community college setting that offers residential housing. The designed LLC model will be used to assist the housing or residential life office by providing suggestions for impacting persistence, retention, and graduation rates. The components needed to design, implement, and assess a successful LLC program will be covered in this study as well, so institutions contemplating orchestrating an LLC will have an understanding of the resources needed. The list of components needed for the LLC initiative will not be exhaustive but will provide a critical assessment of the most valuable resources needed from an institutional viewpoint (faculty, staff, department, etc.). In addition to offering methods for aiding student success initiatives, the LLC model will also offer resources that can be used by various entities associated with LLC programs.

This chapter will also discuss the best practices and highlight successful learning community initiatives that have been implemented in higher education. There are few community colleges that offer student housing in the state of Michigan, and this chapter will address at length how to implement a successful program with institutional resources for those community colleges that offer student housing. Students who graduate with an associate's degree are more likely to graduate with a four-year degree if they decide to

continue their education. Lastly, this chapter will offer a suggested model that can be used in a community college environment that provides student housing.

The information provided in this chapter will provide insight to any housing entity on the community college level, with the following tools needed to implement an LLC program:

1. The physical resources needed to develop an LLC program

2. Clearly defined programs goals for the specialized community

3. The internal institutional partners needed to successfully implement an LLC program (Academic Advising, Housing/Residential Life, Student Life, Tutoring Services, and Faculty Representation)

4. The best practices utilized in higher education that impact persistence, retention, and graduation rates

5. Suggestive LLC model for community colleges with residential student housing.

Physical Resources

The first key resource needed to implement an LLC in a residential setting is a facility designated to house the student learners. The designated space needs to be an area, floor, or wing of a housing facility where all the learners that wish to be part of the program can be housed in the same area for increased camaraderie among participants. The housing must provide amenities, such as study lounges, for learners to study by themselves or with other members in the community or gather for social purposes.

Another pertinent resource related to the designated housing facility is the selected space must be sufficient to meet the diversity of student learners. The designated student housing must have accommodations for male, female, transgender, and persons with accessibility or medical needs, etc. to navigate throughout the facility. The learners of the community must have the ability to make themselves comfortable, which is why

the various options for residential living in the community must be considered before

implementing a specialized initiative in the residential environment. The area chosen for

the community must have a designated space large enough to accommodate weekly

meetings with respective faculty, staff, and members of the program.

Defined Goals

The next essential resource needed to implement an LLC initiative on a

community college campus is clearly defined goals with specific outcomes that can be

measured to assess the program's effectiveness. Another aspect in the development of a

successful LLC initiative, in relation to the outcome metrics for the program, is

determining how to evaluate the impact of the community in conjunction with student

success. In a book titled *Access, Success, and Completion, a Primer for Community*

College Faculty, Administrators, Staff, and Trustees, O'Banion (2013) offers insight into

what constitutes student success in higher education. In the opening chapter of this book,

O'Banion provides several examples of how student success is defined by practitioners

and educators in academia:

> Further complicating the definition of success is the confusion between success as
> process and success as outcome. Some educators favor viewing success as
> progress toward a goal----as long as students are enrolled and not failing, they are
> deemed successful. Many educators today favor the view of success as outcome-
> based and create outcome measures and indicators as achievement points by
> which to signal success (p. 3). Creating a definition of student success is also
> difficult because of the historical tensions between educators who favor a liberal
> arts/general education perspective and educators who favor a workforce training
> perspective. "Man does not live by bread alone!" versus "Yes, but, when he gets
> hungry he will need the wages that come from a job to purchase the bread,"
> frames the dilemma that separates, in the community college at least, the transfer
> faculty from the career and technical education faculty. (p. 4)

The successful development of an LLC in a community college setting is established on the foundation that the outcomes and goals of the program are clearly defined and focused on student success. O'Banion (2013) states that if the community college does not create a system that will ensure the success of students, the community college that we know today may not exist in the future, and the community college we dream of for our future may never come to be (p. 3). The literature suggests that there is not a clear definition for the term *student success,* so it is crucial when trying to use this term that other factors be considered in defining student success. Several factors that should be considered are students' personal goals, educational attainment, persistence rates, retention rates, and graduation rates. The rationale behind bearing in mind other possible ways to define success is that the goals of the learner may vary from the goals of the program or the institution, i.e., certificate program versus life skills course or development course completion versus degree-seeking program.

Internal Institutional Partners

To successfully implement an LLC initiative in a residential setting, the following suggestive internal institutional partners, although not an exhaustive list, are needed to ensure optimal implementation of the program: Academic Advising, Housing/Residential Life, Campus/Student Life, Tutoring Services, and Faculty Representation. These departments provide vital internal resources to students who come to their respective area for academic guidance or tools needed for educational success at the institution. O'Banion (2013) contends that for institutions committed to the Completion Agenda and attempting to create pathways with clear direction for students, each college must create

its own version of a Student Success Pathway based on its resources, culture, and priorities (p. 14).

Academic advising. Academic Advising is an institutional resource that provides students with information about career exploration and what courses the student needs to take to fulfill their educational requirements. McClenney and Arnsparger (2012) state that according to the *CCSSE* (Center for Community College Student Engagement) survey, students who were surveyed consistently point to academic advising and planning as the most important college support service (p. 69). The development of an LLC program needs the backing of an Academic Advising office to help the student learner identify what courses are needed and to navigate through the educational process. The Academic Advising office provides the student learner with resources that extend beyond what courses the student needs to take, to crucial information on how the types of courses the student enrolls in impact his or her financial aid package. In addition to offering advice regarding financial aid, this office helps the student to understand the institutional practices that are integral to the student's success in and outside the classroom environment.

Housing/residential life. The Housing/Residential Life department is the second essential internal institutional resource needed for the implementation of an LLC program. This office affords an institution the opportunity to deliver an internal resource whose focus is to provide residential students with a safe, community-focused, and thriving residential setting dedicated to its student members' academic and personal successes. The Housing/Residential Life office has a professional and paraprofessional staff who are responsible for programming and opportunities for engagement in the

facility or institution. Due to the nature of their positions, those key members of the

organization act as the *loco parentis* of the student in the facility.

The members of the Housing/Residential Life department are also required to

enforce campus and housing policies, in addition to ensuring that all students who reside

in the facility are engaged in the respective housing community. The programming that

the residential life staff implements for residents of the building includes, but is not

limited to, the following:

- academic programming (note-taking, study skills)

- community development

- health and wellness programs (ranging from nutrition based programming to sleep
  habits)

- diversity-based initiatives

- self-awareness programs

- campus engagement programming

The Housing/Residential Life department's role in the development of an LLC is

crucial because this resource is integral in getting those members who are part of the

specialized community engaged and involved in institutional initiatives. The staff of the

Housing/Residential Life program are the ones who are on the front lines, residing with

the residential students to assist them with the transition into the program and to help

them be successful by providing in-house resources. Lastly, the Housing/Residential Life

program offers students the opportunity to develop socially and academically outside the

classroom setting due to the plethora of activities implemented by the on-campus housing

entity.

Campus/student life. The third institutional resource needed for the implementation of an LLC is the involvement of the Campus/Student Life program. The Campus/Student Life department helps students to make connections within the institution through organized campus events and involvement in student organizations. Individuals that are involved in campus/student life events and programs are more likely to have a greater connection with the institution, which is essential for student retention. The Campus/Student Life department assists current students in their transition from high school or another institution, due to the involvement opportunities students are exposed to during introduction to the institution.

Students' introduction to the institution can range from Welcome Weekend activities to mandatory orientations that the student is exposed to, which help familiarize student learners with college resources and their peers. The activities that are coordinated by the Campus/Student Life office support students in the areas of camaraderie and friendship, which are important for student success and in assisting the student in finding their niche at the college. The premise behind the programs and activities sponsored by the Campus/Student Life department is to have students with similar interests connect with one another due to a bond based on social interaction (programming). Students who are involved on campus are likely to have higher levels of satisfaction with the institution and a greater association with other departments and resources offered by the campus. The key to student success is to ensure that the learner is happy with services and resources offered by the institution, which is essential for persistence, retention, and graduation rates.

The Campus/Student Life office is also responsible for providing students with tools and resources in the area of professional and personal development, to assist in resume writing and networking opportunities. The opportunities provided by the office are also pivotal if the student is trying to enhance his/her leadership skills, which is an asset that potential employers seek in future employees. The relationship that is created with students through involvement with the Campus/Student Life office is instrumental in helping the student develop as learner and scholar at the institution.

Tutoring services. The fourth institutional resource that is vital for the implementation of an LLC program in a collegiate setting is Tutoring Services. The Tutoring Service office provides resources that are not only beneficial to students but to faculty and staff members as well. Tutoring helps student learners comprehend course material by offering students one-on-one attention in a particular subject. As a result of individualized tutoring, the student learner will be able to apply the suggestions and concepts from the coaching and perform better academically. In addition, tutoring helps the learner develop personally in the area of self-growth. The learner will learn how to work through personal difficulties due to the encouragement received from the tutoring center coaching.

The tutoring office is also very beneficial to the faculty members of the institution. Tutoring provides faculty members with a resource where they can refer their respective student(s) for additional support outside of the classroom setting and instructor office hours. The service of tutoring is essential for adjunct faculty members who may have other positions outside of the college setting and cannot maintain routine office hours. Tutors can work with the faculty to ensure that individuals who are having

academic issues in the classroom receive the personalized attention needed to successfully complete the required coursework. Tutoring Services helps extend the positive, supportive nature of the institution in the area of social engagement, which is vital for students who are struggling academically. The tutoring department reinforces the message of the institution and the faculty that the optimal needs of the student are being met through collaborative non-adversarial interactions committed to the student's comprehension of and success in the designated course material.

Faculty representation. The fifth institutional resource that is needed in the implementation of an LLC is to have faculty representation in the development and execution of the specialized residential program. Faculty involvement is crucial in assisting with the completion of the program objectives because of their interaction with students in a classroom setting. The faculty are those who deliver teaching instruction and learning objectives to the student, and are essential for student success.

Weimer (2012) offers five characteristics of learner-centered teaching that are effective in helping higher education students comprehend the material and succeed in their coursework:

1. *Learner-centered teaching engages students in the hard, messy work of learning.* This approach encourages faculty to allow the student to become the active participant in the process, rather than the instructor doing everything for the student in the classroom setting. For example, students can lead the exam review sessions and dictate to the instructor what they are learning, so student learners are more engaged in the process.

2. *Learner-centered teaching includes explicit skill instruction.* The explicit skill instruction approach encourages teaching learning skills in conjunction with the presentation of the classroom material. For example, the instructor can provide students with resources in evaluation, problem solving, and hypothesis forming while discussing the material in the classroom.

3. *Learner-centered teaching encourages students to reflect on what they are learning and how they are learning it.* The reflection and learning approach

creates active dialogue between the instructor and the student, whereby students reflect upon the content learned in class through assignments and critique themselves. The primary focus of this characteristic is to have student learners take responsibility for the decisions they make regarding their learning. For example, the instructor incorporates assignments into the curriculum that have a reflection component, allowing the student to reflect, analyze, and critique how he or she is learning the material.

4. *Learner-centered teaching motivates students by giving them some control over the learning processes.* This characteristic affords students the opportunity to take an active role in how the course is organized in the educational setting. For example, the instructor of the course allows students to determine course assignments deadlines, classroom policies, and evaluation criteria.

5. *Learner-centered teaching encourages collaboration.* The premise of this characteristic is to encourage students and faculty to actively engage in dialogue about the learning process, so both parties are learning from each other. For example, activities are created online or in class, where learners and faculty share information related to the educational experience in the classroom environment. The active participation of both entities opens communication to expand learning and to focus on a common educational endeavor.

Best Practices in Higher Education

Three best practice models employed by institutions are integral for student success, retention, and persistence: the Noel-Levitz, On-Course, and Student Success Pathway models. These practices provide administrators, faculty, and students with tools that are essential for student success in and outside of the classroom. These practices also afford students the encouragement and motivation that aid in completing institutional and personal initiatives.

Noel-Levitz. Noel-Levitz offers an equation that shows its commitment to student success: *Student Learning + Student Engagement + Student Satisfaction = Student Success* (Crockett, 2015). This formula focuses on creating an atmosphere in and outside the classroom where students are placed in a setting that is conducive to their success. The tools that the institution offers to help students succeed range from giving students the one-on-one attention they need in the classroom to ensuring that students are

connected with the financial aid department to help finance their education. The impact

of these resources is invaluable to students who are determining whether to continue at

the institution, drop out of higher education completely, or transfer to another institution.

By creating an institutional culture focused on extensive orientation programs,

development of learning communities, and retention initiatives, institutions can enable

student learners to thrive academically and socially at the institution.

Noel-Levitz suggests three important practices of successful two-year colleges:

they focus on the needs of the student, work to continually improve the quality of the

educational experience, and rely on student satisfaction assessment results to shape their

Quality of Student Life and Learning (QSLL) retention agenda (Crockett, 2015). Noel-

Levitz encourages an institution to look at the data of both successful and unsuccessful

students to determine the factors (who, what, when, where, and why) that influence

students to leave college or to remain enrolled. Analyzing the data helps the institution

focus on which programs or initiatives should be implemented to give students the best

opportunity for college success.

On course. Another method being implemented in higher education to assist with

student retention and completion is the strategy offered by On Course. On Course is a

student success-based program that assists students in learning life and study skills,

primarily for first-year college students. Downing (2014) states that people who are

successful (by their own definition) consistently make wiser choices than people who

struggle (p. xxvii). Students learn to take ownership in determining the steps needed for

their educational success, which is why it is crucial to offer learners resources in

academic and personal development that are engaging and informative. Downing offers

choices that successful students make in comparison to their counterparts who are struggling in college. Table 2 provides insight into the decisions that successful students make pertaining to the skills and tools needed for educational attainment in higher education.

Table 2: Choices of Successful Students

Successful students . . .	Struggling students . . .
accept personal responsibility, seeing themselves as the primary cause of their outcomes and experiences.	**see themselves as victims**, believing that what happens to them is determined primarily by external forces such as fate, luck, and powerful others.
discover self-motivation, finding purpose in their lives by discovering personally meaningful goals and dreams.	**have difficulty sustaining motivation**, often feeling depressed, frustrated, and/or resentful about a lack of direction in their lives.
master self-management, consistently planning and taking purposeful actions in pursuit of their goals and dreams.	**seldom identify specific actions needed to accomplish a desired outcome**, and when they do, they tend to procrastinate.
employ interdependence, building mutually supportive relationships that help them achieve their goals and dreams (while helping others do the same).	**are solitary**, seldom requesting, even rejecting, offers of assistance from those who could help.
gain self-awareness, consciously employing behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes that keep them on course.	**make important choices unconsciously**, being directed by self-sabotaging habits and outdated life scripts.
adopt lifelong learning, finding valuable lessons and wisdom in nearly every experience they have.	**resist learning new ideas and skills**, viewing learning as fearful or boring rather than as mental play.
develop emotional intelligence, effectively managing their emotions in support of their goals and dreams.	**live at the mercy of strong emotions**, such as anger, depression, anxiety, or a need for instant gratification.
believe in themselves, seeing themselves as capable, lovable, and unconditionally worthy human beings.	**doubt their competence and personal value**, feeling inadequate to create their desired outcomes and experiences.

Source: Downing (2014, p. 9). Reprinted with permission from Wadsworth, a division of Cengage Learning. See Appendix A.

The motivation of the student, partnered with Downing's tools, is integral to a learner's success in college. Learners must actively participate in their education by establishing goals in alignment with their educational pursuits, which is essential for their success. Successful students in higher education use the resources offered by their

institution and take responsibility for their achievements and failures on the path to being awarded educational credentials.

Students that struggle in the academic realm are individuals who chose to blame others for their failures and do not take an active role in doing what is needed to be successful in the institution. LLCs are specialized residential communities that can assist students who are struggling academically and socially. The LLC can provide institutional resources ranging from assisting students with goal setting to personalized mentoring in an area that is hindering the student socially or academically.

Student Success Pathway. Student Success Pathway is a model that is currently being used by community colleges and other institutions in higher education with various designs to assist students in the areas of persistence and completion. Rath, Rock, and Laferriere (2013) offers several solutions, that is, pathways that must be employed by institutions of higher education to help learners obtain their educational goals: secondary and postsecondary curriculum alignment, remedial education reform, early college experiences, student supports, financial aid funding incentives, supportive transfer policies, and program and labor market outcome alignment.

Secondary and postsecondary curriculum alignment. The secondary and postsecondary curriculum alignment strategy suggested by Rath et al. (2013) states that high schools need to implement the Common Core Standards (CCS), so when students enter college they are prepared academically for the rigors of higher education coursework. In addition, high schools are encouraged to assess their students' preparedness for college through testing, to gain insight into what remediation needs to take place prior to college to ensure student success.

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Remedial education reform. Remedial education reform is instrumental in helping students to obtain their academic credentials. Students who take remedial courses are paying for a course that does not yield traditional college credits, and it impacts the student's Pell Grant funding because the student loses a year of funding for a non-credit course. In an effort to combat the educational obstacles that are caused by remedial courses, institutions are implementing fast-track programs and other innovative initiatives so students do not lose their motivation in pursuing their educational goals. When institutions experiment with different methods of success related to remedial education to impact students, students will benefit from the results.

Early college experiences. Early college experiences refer to a pathway in which students dually enroll, taking at least one college course prior to high school graduation. Students participating in early college experiences are 50% more likely to graduate from college than their peers are (Rath et al., 2013). Bridge programs are another early college experience program that aid students in their preparation for college, by providing remedial coursework to the student during the summer months. The bridge program prepares the student for collegiate work through course introduction, navigating of campus resources, and opportunities to converse with other students. The camaraderie offered by the program helps the student to engage in collaborative partnerships with fellow peers and institutional resources dedicated to the student's success.

Student supports. Student supports are a college's departmental and non-departmental resources that provide students with academic and non-academic tools needed for degree attainment. The academic supports of the campus are academic advising and tutoring services, which aid students through personalized coaching and

provide tools geared for student success in and outside the classroom. Another departmental resource is support services, which helps a student define his or her personal goals and the value of a college degree (Rath et al., 2013). Students have to personalize their education and goals if they are going to succeed in college by driving their own institutional success.

Financial aid funding. Financial aid and funding incentives need to be made available for community college students who need monetary support to complete their educational goals. Students would benefit if each state or higher education institution provided financial incentives in the form of merit-based aid to offset the student's cost of attending the institution. It is also important for community colleges to offer emergency funding for students who have unanticipated situations, such as vehicle repair, family crisis, etc. Offering increased financial assistance provides a pathway of monetary support, which is one of many reasons why students choose not to complete their academic pursuits.

Supportive transfer policies. Supportive transfer policies are essential in assisting individuals who are interested in continuing their education after their associate's degree or certificate program completion. Rath et al. (2013) state that when learners are able to enroll in a four-year institution and all their credits will transfer, those students have an 82% chance of completing their respective bachelor's degree program (p. 22). On the other hand, Rath et al. note that only 42% of students actually complete their bachelor's degree program when only some of their credits transfer to the four-year institution (p. 22). To help the student who is considering a transfer to a four-year institution, the community college must ensure that the courses the student enrolls in are aligned with the

prospective institution. In addition, the community college needs to strongly urge the student to complete his or her associate's degree or degree program.

Program and labor market outcome alignment. Program and labor market outcome alignment focuses on college academic advisors and counselors alerting students to current trends in the job market, so the learner is able to obtain a job once his or her education is complete. Rath et al. (2013) state that in order to assist students with job security after graduation, it is imperative that college counselors track the current employment trends through use of labor market systems (p. 23). Viewing labor market systems allows college counselors to show prospective students the best options for employment with the student's major; viewing these systems also can prevent students from majoring in an area where the employment opportunity is bleak.

Suggested LLC Model for Community Colleges with Residential Student Housing

The suggested model that is being proposed for community colleges with student housing is focused on assisting students in academic and personal engagement opportunities in and outside the classroom environment. The learner, as a result of active involvement in the residential specialized community, will be able to attain the competencies needed for academic success. The suggested model is composed of eight goals that are intended to motivate the learner to take ownership of his/her academic success with assistance from various institutional entities (Academic Advising, Faculty, Housing/Residence Life, Campus/Student Life, Tutoring Services, and Faculty Representation):

- Goal #1: Successful transition to the institution (orientation, advising, etc.)
- Goal #2: Relationship with peers in the residential setting

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- Goal #3: Social skills development

- Goal #4: Service learning component

- Goal #5: Utilization of the student development theory

- Goal #6: Creation of a personal development plan

- Goal #7: Enhancement of leadership skills

- Goal #8: Successful completion of academic endeavor (student success).
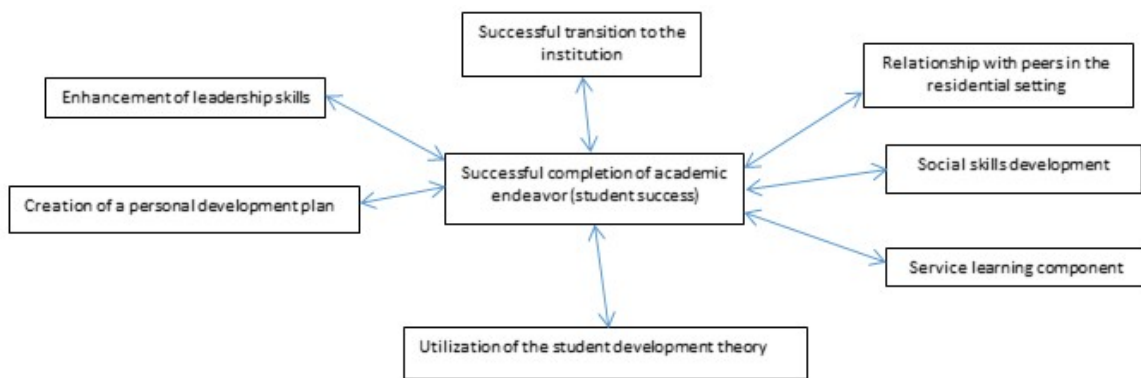
Figure 2. Suggestive LLC model.

Goal #1: Successful Transition to the Institution (Orientation, Advising, etc.)

One of the most important decisions students make is determining if they want to continue their education after high school and to which institutions to send admission applications. After the student has decided what institution he or she would like to attend, the student applies and waits to receive confirmation of acceptance into the institution. Once accepted, the next step for the student is to attend a mandatory orientation session, which includes a campus tour, meeting with several campus resources, and academic advising. McClenney and Arnsparger (2012) noted that students repeatedly say that

orientation is important, that they benefited from the personalized orientation experience, and that colleges should make it mandatory for all entering students (p. 77).

Ensuring students in the residential community attend a mandatory advising session with an institution-provided academic counselor is one of the first steps toward degree completion for participants in the program. The counselor will help the student identify his or her strengths and weaknesses and will offer insight into which programs of study are available based on the student's educational preference. After the advising session with the counselor, the student will have a point person at the institution to use as a resource, if the student has academic questions or concerns. Based on the interaction with the counselor, the student will be well informed of what to do to prepare academically for the upcoming semester; this would have been a barrier if not for the dialogue with the academic counselor. The counselor will assist the student in the area of time management by providing tools (see Appendix C) that will aid the student in balancing the areas of life (academic, societal factors, work, etc.) that could impact the student's persistence and retention at the institution.

LLC program outcomes for successful transition to the college.

- Program participants will attend a mandatory orientation and advising session with a designated (appointed) academic advisor or counselor for both fall and spring/winter semesters.

- Program participants will be familiar with the location of the Academic Advising Office and the location of the student's program director or appointed advisor.

- Program participants will complete a personality assessment tool (Myers-Briggs, Kersley Personality assessment, etc.) during the on-campus orientation session.

Goal #2: Relationship with Peers in the Residential Setting

Lenning, Hill, Saunders, Solan, and Stokes (2013) state that Student Learning Communities (SLCs) are primarily groups of students working together toward learning goals (p. 15). The individuals residing in the LLC are persons who have several goals in common that range from membership in the specialized group to attending the same or similar classes with other members in the facility. The members of the specialized community are responsible for holding themselves and others within the group accountable for their behaviors inside and outside of the designated community. The individuals in the specialized community establish camaraderie with each other through activities and events that are designed to create opportunities for engagement.

One of the premises behind the specialized community is having a smaller community within the community of the institution. The community within a community concept encourages members of the LLC to be active contributors to the campus environment through participation in intramurals, organizations, and campus activities and programs. Individuals that are part of the LLC participate in activities and programs that are specially designed for those members and that help the student to be successful educationally and socially.

LLC program outcomes for relationship with peers in the residential setting.

- Participants in the LLC program are responsible for participating and engaging in LLC activities and events that are sponsored by the LLC program.

- Participants in the LLC program will be responsible for attending college-sponsored events that are not sponsored by the LLC.

- Participants in the LLC program are required to establish a set of standards for the community they are residing in, along with other members of the community, and to uphold those principles that have been established by members of the community.

Goal #3: Social Skills Development

Learners who are members of the LLC will develop competencies in the area of social skills through engagement in activities that are focused on helping the learner develop socially, personally, and professionally. Lenning et al. (2013) state that the guiding principle for any type of LLC should be community growth, the power of many versus the power of one (p. 45). When learners are placed in an environment in which they interact with other learners and faculty, the opportunity to develop in the area of social skills is greatly enhanced. The environment of the LLC is designed to ensure that the learner's knowledge base is greatly expanded, due to the discussion of course content inside and outside the classroom environment in the residential community. The residential community also provides many occasions for the learner to participate in opportunities that will aid the participating members in public speaking development and networking. The ability to obtain proficiencies in social skills is essential for the learner's success within the institution and the specialized residential community.

Hurd and Stein (2004) state that the integration of students' academic and social lives in a residential learning community allows greater interaction between students, as well as among students, faculty, and staff (p. 10). The engagement activities closely associated with the community contribute to the students who are active members of the community having higher grade point averages and a stronger connection with the institution. The greater the connection the student has with the institution, the more likely that the student will persist at the institution, which increases the student's chance of graduating with their respective educational credential.

LLC program outcomes for social skills development.

- Participants in the LLC program will enhance their public speaking skills through mandatory LLC dialogue-driven programs and events with faculty, staff, and students of the institution.

- Participants in the LLC program will be responsible for attending non-LLC based events, whereby the learner can network with other departments or entities within the institutional setting.

Goal #4: Service Learning Component

Inkelas et al. (2006b) outline the benefits of living-learning programs, one of which is that specialized communities create environments in which learning is based on inquiry (p. 11). These communities encourage students to participate in college-sponsored initiatives that promote scholarship among staff and faculty, whose purpose is to stimulate intellectual growth in the communal setting. The learning that occurs as a result of the interaction between student and faculty/staff leads to scholarship advancements within the academic realm and personal achievements for the LLC member. The personal growth of the student is one of the intended benefits of the service learning component offered by the specialized community.

Students who are part of an LLC that has a service learning component are exposed to settings outside of the residential and educational environment. The service learning component promotes giving back to those who are less fortunate. Daniel (2011) contends that service learning is integral to helping participants develop skills, build leadership, participate in the area of service, and improve literacy levels. Members of LLCs that participate in organized service projects will grow scholastically in the educational setting due to the correlation between the hands-on learning initiative and the service experience. Service learning provides students opportunities to be involved in

their educational process through participating in community- and non-community-based experiences that enhance the learning process.

LLC program outcomes for service learning component.

- Participants in the LLC program will be required to participate in at least one service learning project per semester.

- Participants in the LLC program will be responsible for journaling their service learning experience and relating the experience to an educational course.

Goal #5: Utilization of the Student Development Theory

Student development theory is based on the foundation of identifying and providing a structure for students to be successful in an academic setting. There are five categories of student development theories that are being implemented by higher educational institutions: psychosocial theories, cognitive structural theories, person-environment theories, humanistic existential theories, and student development process models. These models vary in student development concepts and implementation but are essential in aiding students who are seeking direction for academic and personal success in college. In addition to providing students with tools, these models assist faculty and staff by providing a foundation for understanding the development of the student as he or she continues through the institution.

Astin (1999) states that the theory of student involvement argues that a particular curriculum, to achieve the effects intended, must elicit sufficient student effort and investment of energy to bring about the desired learning and development (p. 522). Students will not succeed because of a specially designed curriculum, but will succeed if they have an interest in the subject matter and motivation to be successful in their academic endeavors. The processes that educators implement to help students obtain their

educational credentials are pivotal in contributing to students' success inside the

classroom and with other non-academic institutional entities.

LLC program outcomes for utilization of the student development theory.

- LLC participants will be immersed in activities and initiatives that will develop the individual in the areas of self-motivation as a learner and preservation as a member of society.

- LLC participants will be involved in at least one club, organization, or intramural activity that is not affiliated with the specialized residential community each semester and will keep a journal on their growth as a result of participation.

Goal #6: Creation of a Personal Development Plan

Beausaert, Segers, and Gijselaers (2011) state that personal development plans

(PDPs) are tools used to present information about the competencies the employee has

been working on and is planning to develop (p. 234). A study conducted by Beausaert et

al. (2011) found that when employees view a personal development plan as a tool for

learning and development, they are more likely to undertake learning activities and, in

turn, perform better than when the assessment tool is viewed as a promotion and selection

instrument (p. 246). PDPs in an LLC environment can be used to motivate students to

learn, because they create and accomplish goals for themselves, rather than having a non-

vested party do it for them.

Personal development plans provide insight and an opportunity for an individual

to engage in self-reflection regarding the direction of one's life. PDPs offer a personal

perspective for individuals needing assistance with making decisions to ensure they are

reaching their personalized goals. PDPs helps individuals determine where they currently

are in their life and where they want to be, as well as the necessary steps that must be

taken to ensure that their personal goals are met. If individuals have a plan for the

direction they need to take, they are more likely to be academically, socially, and personally successful.

LLC participant outcomes for creation of a personal development plan.

- LLC participants will create a personal development plan for their first year of college and involvement in the program (see Appendix B).

- LLC participants will create an online portfolio during their first semester in the program and update it accordingly, based on the accomplishments of their personal development plan.

Goal #7: Enhancement of Leadership Skills

Murphy and Johnson (2011) state that leadership skills develop as part of the genetic makeup of an individual and continue from birth through adolescence (p. 460). Murphy and Johnson propose a theory based on early influencers, such as genetics, parenting styles, and early learning experiences, that play an integral role in the development of a person's leadership skills. The environment and leadership style with which individuals identify are essential in honing the skills needed for leadership growth and development as a productive member of society.

LLC environments help learners develop leadership skills by providing a residential setting committed to the student's academic and personal growth. The community provides opportunities for the learner to engage in activities and events that will be beneficial after graduation from the institution. The LLC allows its members to learn invaluable skills and participate in dialogue outside of the traditional classroom setting, so learners are more immersed in their environment, contributing to growth in leadership. Pearce (2007) states, "In leadership development setting, leadership models supply a useful framework that facilitates the understanding of participants' natural

leadership proclivities…which is why leadership development professionals depend on models to guide their leadership efforts" (p. 356). The LLC provides opportunities for its members to explore various leadership models and assists participants in determining which model is most beneficial for them.

LLC participant outcomes for enhancement of leadership skills.

- LLC participants will participate in leadership development initiatives sponsored by the residential community and the institution.

- LLC participants will be responsible for developing, implementing, and spearheading a project or activity for LLC members or the respective community within the first year of the program.

Goal #8: Successful Completion of Academic Endeavor (Student Success)

Successful completion of an academic endeavor indicates that the learner has completed his or her academic pursuits, such as a certificate or degree program. Tinto (2012) noted in a study that 80% of students who begin in public and private four-year institutions either earn a degree or certificate or remain enrolled after six years; however, for those students who begin in a public two-year college, just over half (54.1%) do so (p. 138). It should be noted that two- and four-year completion percentages in the areas of academics and student success differ from one student to the next due to the motivation of the student for enrolling in the institution. To assist learners in accomplishing their respective goals in attending the institution, there must be an understanding of the learners' needs so they have the best opportunity for student success in and outside the classroom environment (*See Figure 2*).

Lenning et al. (2013) state that several principles must work in concert to form the support of the Learning Community (LC) in the community environment: emergent

growth, articulation of goals, structural dependence, respect for others, and sharing (p.

45). In a philosophical sense, these principles are needed for success in the community

environment because they assist learners in recognizing the nuances that either hamper or

help their educational and personal success. As noted by Lenning et al., the constructing

of goals does not guarantee that all members' perceptions will be equal, but formulating

goals does help focus on the intent of the LCs: to expand the community's knowledge

and effectiveness to align with these goals and their level of achievement (pp. 47-49). It

is imperative that all members of the specialized community are in agreement in

accomplishing their educational goals if the community is to provide the tools and

resources needed for successful completion of academic endeavors.

LLC participant outcomes for successful completion of academic endeavor (student success).

- LLC participants will be responsible for participating in an active study hall session with other members in the program on a weekly basis for their first year in the program.

- LLC participants will be responsible for meeting in person with an academic adviser (counselor) at least once each semester to ensure that they are enrolled in the proper courses that lead to degree completion.

- LLC participants will meet with the program coordinator or director of the LLC program, designated faculty, or designee, to review personal and professional goals pertaining to their scholastic achievement.

Summary

The planning, development, and implementation of an LLC program consists of

many variables that must be consistently aligned to ensure the needs of the students are

being met. The needs required for educational success in the institution vary from learner

to learner, so it is necessary to have the physical and internal resources in place. The

internal resources, such as academic advising, housing/residence life, campus/student life, tutoring services, and faculty representation, must be in agreement and align with the goals of the LLC program. The success of the LLC initiative is driven by a common goal: student success that extends beyond academic success to the personal goals of the engaged student learner.

The best practices offered by Noel-Levitz, On-Course, and Student Success Pathway are strategies that are currently being implemented in higher education programs to increase institutions' retention, persistence, and graduation rates. The focus on helping students take personal responsibility and accountability for their educational direction is essential for guiding students along a pathway of student success. Learners who are more engaged in their educational process are more likely to succeed, because they have the personal motivation needed to complete their program requirements. Students who persist in two-year institutions are likely to persist at four-year institutions if they wish to continue their educational pursuits.

The suggested LLC model provides a construct that should be considered before implementing a living-learning initiative in a two-year institution. The model focuses on the learner taking an active role in determining the educational pathway that is needed for student success inside and outside the classroom environment. Providing learners with the tools to be successful through education, life skills, and empowerment is the necessary foundation for student success. The specialized residential community is designed with students' needs in mind, so the barriers that could potentially hinder academic achievement are lessened and learners are able to accomplish their intended goals.

CHAPTER 4: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN AND FINDINGS FOR LLCs

Six Step Implementation Plan

The implementation of LLC initiatives requires several measures be taken into account to ensure the goals of the program and participant academic needs are met. The first step of the implementation process is a meeting between faculty and institutional partners (tutoring, student life, and residence life, etc.) to discuss and identify goals and parameters of the program with approval from upper level administrators. The buy-in of the institution's internal entities is imperative for successful implementation of the LLC program in the residential facility. The vested parties during the first meeting should appoint a Coordinator or Program Director who will be responsible for overseeing the marketing, assessment, and implementation of the program goals and outcomes. The Coordinator or Program Director will be an individual with housing and residential life experience in the community college setting. All vested parties (coordinator/director, RAs, staff, faculty, etc.) associated with the specialized community initiative will go through a specialized leadership training approved by the Director of Residence Life.

In addition to developing the parameters of the program, one notable requirement is that all participants of the LLC will take one or more classes needed for graduation that will be taught by an LLC faculty member during the first year in the program. The cohort

of students will be required to enroll and participate in discussions led by LLC faculty, staff, and members of the community on a weekly basis in the residential facility.

The second step in the implementation of an LLC initiative is the development of program goals with suggested outcomes. The creation of the program's outcomes provides a baseline of who, what, where, why, when, and by whom the initiatives will be carried out, to ensure the integrity of the goals is not compromised. Once the goals have been established, the Coordinator or Program Director will meet with all institutional partners and finalize the objectives of the living-learning initiative. In relation to the program objectives, the Coordinator or Program Director will work with the Housing/Residential Life personnel to obtain a designated area in a housing facility in which members of the specialized community can reside.

The third step is the marketing of the LLC program initiative to all first year students who are entering the institution and choosing to reside on campus. Students who express an interest in the program will complete an LLC membership application (see Appendix D). The determination of which members are admitted into the program will be centered on how many residential units the housing/residence office provides for members of the program, and the recommendation of the Coordinator or Program Director. Within the first three weeks of the semester, the members of the LLC program will be required to submit a weekly schedule (see Appendix C) to the Coordinator or Program Director and sign an agreement, which is included in the application statement (see Appendix D), committing for one year to the program goals and obligations associated with their membership. If students fail to comply with the directives of the program, they will be subject to the consequences of non-compliance (see Appendix E).

The fourth step in the implementation of the program initiatives is the requirement for members to engage in an orientation process prior to arriving on campus. The program orientation process will consist of a full tour of the campus, highlighting key departments and faculty resources who are associated with the LLC. During the on-campus orientation process, those persons selected to be members of the program will complete a personality assessment tool (Myers-Briggs, Kersley Personality assessment, etc.) through the Academic Advising Office. The assessment module will provide the Coordinator or Program Director of the program with insight on the personalities of the participants in the community as it relates to the needs and internal dynamics of the group. In addition to assessments, the participants in the program will engage in group activities that emphasize the importance of teamwork, self-discovery, and the characteristics of a successful community.

The fifth step in the implementation of a successful LLC initiative is having the participants of the community create standards and goals. The created goals help participants hold themselves and each other accountable for the mutually created goals. The onus of the residential initiative is to have buy-in of the program goals and objectives by allowing the residents of the community to have a say in their education and the area they are residing in. Learners who are actively engaged in their educational pursuits are more likely to succeed academically in the areas of persistence, retention, and graduation. The LLC must offer its members the opportunity to have autonomy over their personal and academic decisions, if the student is going to be successful and learn to be a productive member of society.

The last step in the implementation of an LLC program is to have an assessment plan in place to evaluate the effectiveness of the community (see Appendix F). The assessment plan must include the indicators that measure the goals and outcomes of the program to ensure that the objectives were accomplished through involvement in the LLC. The participants in the program must be assessed twice during the first year of the program. The assessment must be given to the participants during the middle of the first semester at the institution and again at the end of the participant's second semester of the program. Program assessment is necessary to provide data for the LLC internal stakeholders regarding the services and resources being delivered to the members. The assessment will also help the internal stakeholders plan, do, check, and adjust (PDCA) the program for the next cohort of members who participate in the institutional initiative.

Findings for LLCs

LLCs have been pivotal in assisting students and institutions as it applies to persistence, retention, and graduation rates. These specialized learning communities are established to aid student members with tools and resources needed to navigate through the barriers and nuances that hamper learner success in and outside the classroom. LLCs have been in existence for numerous decades and have evolved over time from students residing in a designated section of a housing facility to taking one or more academic classes together. The programs associated with the residential living-learning initiative have provided opportunities for engagement and educational supports that aid learners in completing their academic endeavors. Tinto (2003) states that participation in learning communities tends to enhance the quality of student learning.

Student Persistence

Prerequisites have to be established by the college to ensure that students have the resources and tools needed to be successful in their academic endeavor at the institution. Tinto (2012) states that several conditions must be met for student success, which are student expectations, institutional support, opportunities for student involvement, assessment, and feedback geared toward student performance in an academic setting (p. 7). The conditions for success require that all institutional stakeholders and students buy into the objectives and processes garnered toward increasing and enhancing student success outcomes. Academic Advising offices' roles are fundamental to student success initiatives because they provide students with the educational plan (courses, requirements, guidance) needed for graduation.

LLCs have been linked to student persistence measures due to the institutional supports and opportunities for involvement that result from residing in the community. Stier (2014) noted that the variables of involved faculty and peer interaction contributed to the academic success and persistence rates among all residential students who resided in the facility. Tinto (2003) noted that learning community students tended to spend more time together outside the classroom environment than students in traditional unrelated classes do (p. 5). Learning community students are more likely to persist in the institutional setting, if institutional and peer supports are in place to provide the appropriate amount of encouragement and motivation to help the learner succeed.

Student Retention

Retention for students who are members of an LLC tends to be favorable as opposed to those students who are non-members in the residential communities. Living in

a residence hall during the freshman year and not having to work off campus have the strongest positive effects on degree completion for students (Astin & Oseguera, 2005). LLCs and institutional specially designed programs and initiatives are needed to help students be successful in the area of college retention. Bean (2005) offers nine themes that should be considered in assisting students in the area of retention, which are the following:

- *Student's background* – Societal factors play an important role in determining the success rate of students who are enrolling in an institution of higher education. A student's parents' educational background can have a significant impact on the success of the student, due to the financial resources the parents may be able to supply to the student. The relationship between the institution and the student must be cohesive to increase the student's likelihood of educational success. The student's background can impede or advance student success, which makes it crucial for institutions to adapt to the ever-changing needs of the student.

- *Money and finances* – The lack of financial resources is a reason why many students state that they have to leave the institution, because they cannot afford to attend. Students that come from families who have the financial resources to afford to send their son/daughter to college are more likely to be retained than students who have limited financial means. Colleges can assist students with limited resources by offering more grants and cheaper tuition, which offsets the financial burden that many low-income students face. Students who work while attending college are likely to be retained because they develop the intrinsic values that motivate them to complete their educational goals. However, it should be noted that students who work full-time, or more than 20 hours a week, face academic hardships due to the balance between work and academic responsibilities.

- *Grades and academic performance* – The way a course is taught and the educational benefit of the course have a significant impact on how the student fares at the college. The institution must provide an educational service that is beneficial to students to ensure that the student's likelihood of being retained is increased. For institutions that fail to provide the educational resources requested by the student, the retention of said student is decreased. Poor academic performance is the second most commonly used reason for individuals who leave an institution; the student is dismissed from the college if the college required grade point average is not maintained. The Academic Advising office's role is essential to getting students in the proper classes and directing students to the resources that are beneficial for student success.
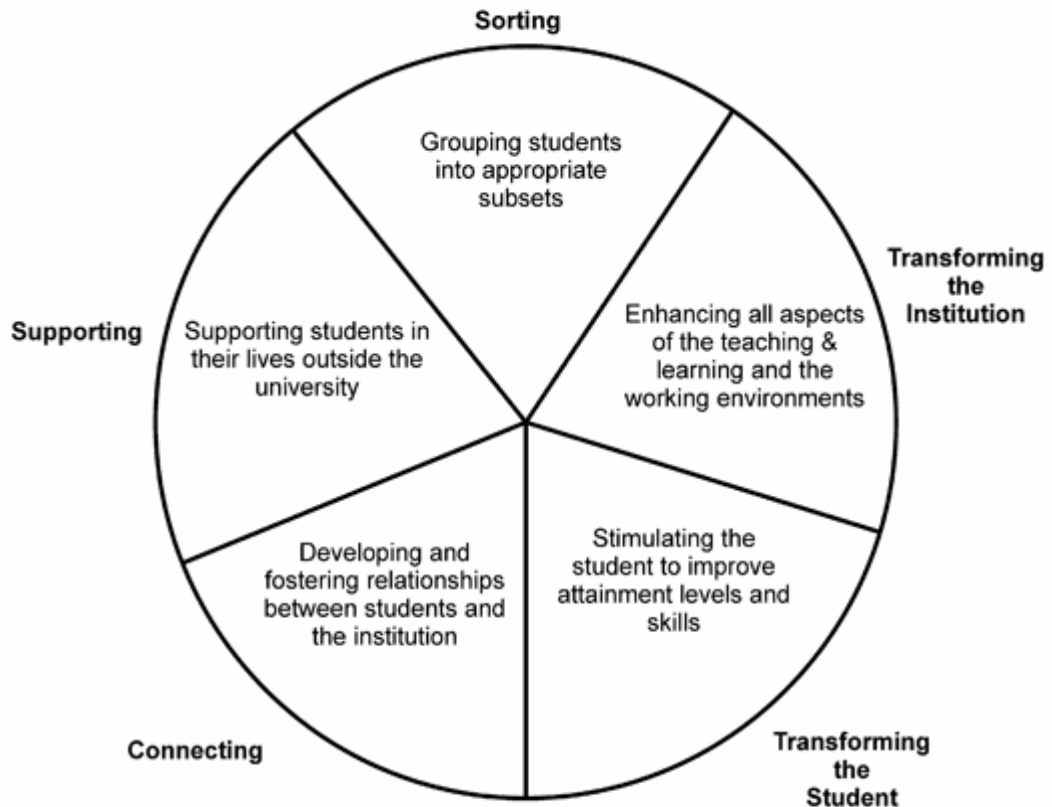
- *Social factors* – The social component of the academic regimen is key to student success, because a student must feel connected to the institution through engagement in activities or association with peers of similar status. The interaction with peers assists students in achieving personal satisfaction with the college and increases a student's chances of retention due to a connection with the institution. Also pivotal to the student's success at the institution is the support that the learner receives from family, friends, and associates who attended college before them and the knowledge distributed to the FTIC individual. The influence of social activities with an educational component can assist in the area of retention by offering academic information and opportunities for engagement to the participants immersed in the activity. Housing assignments, student groups, and classes with a cohort of peers create opportunities for connections that are pertinent for student retention.

- *Bureaucratic factors* – Institutional offices have to focus on helping the student get the appropriate information as it pertains to payment due dates or course offerings for an upcoming semester. Students' interactions with student services and enrollment management offices can have a positive or negative influence on how the student perceives the support they are receiving from the institution. When students feel that they are supported by the offerings of an institution, the student is likely to persist based on the positive interactions with representatives of the college. Another area in the bureaucratic realm that can assist students, in the area of support at the institution, is when offices tend to go above and beyond to assist the student as opposed to referring them to another resource or office for assistance. For example, an FTIC student is the first in their family to go to college, the admissions' office or academic advising office offers assistance with the completion of an application for a scholarship or registering with the disability services' office.

- *The external environment* – Factors beyond academic and financial concerns can be so disruptive that the student has no choice but to leave the institution. Examples can range from the birth or death of a child, to aging parents, to familial issues due to a significant other transferring for work-related opportunities. The institution can take many steps to ensure that the student has the proper resources for academic success; however, situations occur that are outside of the student's control, where the best option for the student is to leave the institution. Institutions have no control over "life changing" variables as they pertain to student enrollment at the institution, but it is crucial for higher education entities to provide adequate resources dedicated to student retention and success. The installation of appropriate resources catered to student success creates a bond between the student and college, which reduces the barriers that are associated with the student transferring to another institution.

- *Psychological and attitudinal factors* – Self-efficacy, approach/avoidance, and locus of control are theories that have an important role in retaining students on the collegiate level. Self-efficacy is student-driven, and the student is responsible for taking ownership in their educational success by developing the internal

motivational factors that will aid them in adapting to the academic realm and taking the necessary steps to achieve success. Approach/avoidance can impact student success due to the method or methods the student utilizes to adapt to the educational environment. An example of approach/avoidance is when the student chooses to take a positive approach and goes to class as opposed to the negative approach, which is to sleep in and blow off their academics for the day. The locus of control theory focuses on student engagement with activities they deem to be beneficial to their education success, such as believing that good grades equate to proper study habits as opposed to not studying, which results in bad grades.

- *Institutional fit and commitment* – Students' good attitudes toward the institution are necessary if a student is going to be retained at the institution. When a student can find his/her niche within the institution by having a core of friends with similar interests and a sense of belonging, the student is likely to have a favorable impression of the institution. The retention rate of the institution increases in part due to the student's perception of the college and the "institutional bonds" that strengthen the relationship between a student and the institution. Institutional commitment is the loyalty that the student has for the educational entity they are attending. The greater the loyalty a student has for the institution, the greater the chances are that the student will complete their educational endeavors at the college. Colleges have to ensure that the services they are delivering to the student are delivered in a manner that is positive, if the bond of the student to the college is going to be a favorable one.

- *Intentions* – Understanding the student's reasons and rationale for attending the institution is imperative in determining the probability that a student will return to the institution the next year. Institutions need to be more proactive in the second semester of a first-year student's academic life by gathering information about the student's intent to return the next academic year. The information collected from the first-year student is beneficial because it could create an opportunity for the college to get the student engaged in resources that will help the student return the next year. The sooner the college is informed of what resources are needed, the sooner retention efforts can be implemented to assist the student. Even though the college may implement retention efforts, the student could leave the institution due to factors beyond the institution's control, which is why institutions should have discussions with first-year students early in their second semester at the college.

One notable model that has been implemented in higher education, to aid institutions in the area of student retention, is the Beatty-Guenter Retention Strategy Model (Figure 3). The model focuses on providing a construct between the various retention strategies being utilized in higher education and the commonality of those

approaches in relation to student success and retention. The model focuses on five areas

that are essential to student retention and success, which are the following: sorting,

transforming the institution, transforming the student, connecting, and supporting.

Sorting emphasizes the value of placing students into the appropriate subsets, i.e. students

with similar interests, backgrounds, or educational levels in the same group for

classification purposes. Transforming the institution is applicable to student success due

to the notion that the institution is making changes needed to help students be successful,

i.e., implementing various teaching strategies and opportunities inside and outside the

classroom to engage the student learner. Transforming the student empowers the student

to take ownership of their educational attainment by utilizing the tools available at the

institution to aid in the student's success, i.e., academic advising and tutoring services.

Connections with faculty and staff are necessary for the student to stay engaged and

supported at the institution, i.e., mutual respect between faculty and student in which the

student feels that he has a rapport with the instructor. Support by the faculty and

institutional internal entities are required for the student to persist, i.e., financial aid,

counseling, and tutoring.

Sorting

Grouping students into appropriate subsets

Transforming the Institution

Enhancing all aspects of the teaching & learning and the working environments

Supporting

Supporting students in their lives outside the university

Developing and fostering relationships between students and the institution

Stimulating the student to improve attainment levels and skills

Connecting

Transforming the Student

Source: Johnston, Veronique, *Developing Strategies to Improve Student Retention: Reflections from a Scottish University*, 2002, 4.

Figure 3. The Beatty-Guenter retention strategy model.

The Beatty-Guenter retention strategy model provides a construct that can be utilized by institutions of higher education to retain students. The model is predicated on all vested institutional entities helping students to obtain their goals through the use of transformative educational initiatives implemented by the institution, and giving students the resources needed to be successful in their educational pathway. To assist students in the completion of their educational endeavors, a supportive environment must be based on a respectful relationship between faculty and students.

Student Graduation

Stassen (2003) states that the central mission of learning communities is to provide students with a learning environment that helps support their academic success (p. 595). Students who are members of learning communities tend to have higher grade point averages, due to their participation in the community, than persons not associated with the specialized community. Stassen notes that learning communities have a positive impact on the social integration of the student in the academic environment, based on the structure and delivery of the program outcomes. The success of the student is driven by the student's comprehension of the course material and favorable view of the institution as it pertains to student engagement with faculty and members of the specialized community.

Moses (2013) stated that 91.66% of students who resided in living-learning communities offering specialized programming and academic support were retained at the college after their first year in the LLC program. Moses also noted that those who participated in the specialized community had higher grade point averages and graduation rates than those who did not. Times Staff (2012) identified a strong correlation between participation in learning communities and graduation rates. The research conducted by the Times Staff found that students who participated in a one-semester learning program at a community college had a 4.6% higher graduation rate than non-participants. The success of the participants in the program was attributed to a cohort model based on students taking one or more classes together in a given semester. The student's constant exposure to members in the program and institutional resources, such as academic and counseling support and vouchers, were contributing factors in the success of the institutional initiative.

Ensign (2010) found four ways that colleges could increase their graduation rates, which are the following: focus on likely dropouts, build up advising services, involve diverse voices, and make logistical changes. Ensign noted that focusing on factors such as a student's lack of involvement on campus and distance from home can help identify students who are not making a connection with the campus environment. One of the reasons why students do not persist is not identifying with the campus (Tinto, 2012). Reaching out to potential dropouts increases the persistence and graduation rate of the institution. Another area of improvement for colleges offered by Ensign is building up the advising services at the institution. Increased academic advisors create opportunities for students to interact with staff, who can advise students on what courses are needed to help the student achieve their academic goal. The involvement of diverse voices is vital to increasing graduation rates for higher education entities. Institutions of higher education need to involve students, faculty, staff, and community members in the implementation and feedback process to ensure that all angles are being explored in the area of increasing graduation rates. The last suggestion offered by Ensign to help an institution increase its graduation rate is for the college to make logistical changes. Logistical changes implies colleges will make necessary alterations to the course offerings that are available to students, such as ensuring that courses students need do not overlap with each other. The subtle changes that an institution can make in its policies and practices as it applies to students will help increase the college's graduation rate.

Summary

LLCs provide educational supports and institutional initiatives to increase an institution's persistence, retention, and graduation rates in collaboration with the goals of the students' academic plans. The implementation of any program requires a comprehensive process that must be followed, in addition to the buy-in of several key institutional stakeholders and engaged student membership. Several different models and theories point to what must be done to ensure that an institution's educational goals for its student members are met. To help the student obtain their educational goals, the institution must assess the student's needs and provide the necessary resources for degree completion.

The needs of each student will vary based on socioeconomic status and educational competencies needed for educational success at the institution. Providing students with an educational pathway is important for optimal success in and outside of the classroom. Students need support and encouragement from institutional members to assist them in developing a sense of purpose and relationship with the college. LLCs are a conduit that offers community resources, such as academic support, networking, and opportunities for engagement outside of the structured classroom environment. Institutions that offer services that foster the relationship between students and the college are more likely to have higher persistence, retention, and graduation rates than those educational entities that choose not to engage the student body.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

The study's purpose is to provide a framework for a residential program that can be implemented on any community college campus, which will aid the residential population in the areas of persistence, retention, and completion of graduation requirements. LLCs are specialized residential communities for students that choose to reside in college-offered housing with other individuals who voluntarily participate in academic, personal, and professional development activities. The programs and activities associated with the community are established upon the premises that the institution will assess the needs of the learner and ensure that resources are available to help the engaged member obtain their academic goals, also known as student success.

This study reviewed several of the practices and successful strategies used in higher education to date. Even though the information provided in the study was not exhaustive, relevant content is offered to assist the higher educational entity in generating the resources needed for learner success. The findings from the study demonstrated that those who are members in LLCs tend to fare better academically than those who are not members of the specialized community. LLCs provide opportunities for learners to become more engaged in their residential and academic setting through establishment of camaraderie with peers and interaction with institutional faculty and staff. Research demonstrates that if a student is happy with and feels a connection to their institution, the

student is more likely to persist than a student who has not established a connection with the institution. This study explored the following questions in relation to the impact that LLCs have on student success inside and outside the classroom setting:

- How effective are living-learning communities in residential facilities in higher education in relation to student persistence, retention, and graduation?

- What factors contribute to living-learning community members' academic success?

- What impact do living-learning communities have on students' social and interpersonal skills?

- What are the persistence, retention, and graduation rates for students who participate in LLCs?

The questions cited above were explored extensively through research articles, literature reviews, living-learning dissertations, and current/past best practices to determine the best pathways for student success. The information uncovered in the study demonstrated that LLCs have a positive outcome on students in the areas of connecting to the college, peer relationships, and academic performance. The study also concluded that those who are members of LLCs are likely to have a more favorable perception of the institution, which strongly correlates with students returning to the institution after their freshman year.

Findings

Research question #1: How effective are living-learning communities in residential facilities in higher education in relation to student persistence, retention, and graduation?

A study conducted at the University of Central Florida found that 91.66% of students participating in a living-learning community were retained after the first year

(Moses, 2013). The study also concluded that those who participated in the LLC had higher persistence, retention, and graduation rates than those who were not members of the community. The students who were involved with the community noted that the dedicated support and services offered by the specialized residential community were instrumental in getting acclimated to the campus.

Research question #2: What factors contribute to living-learning community members' academic success?

Mishra (2012) stated that learning communities create opportunities for students and faculty to interact inside and outside of the classroom, which engages the student learner with their course material. The benefit of being more engaged in the course material while interacting with faculty is essential for the student to develop the competencies needed to obtain proficiency and success in the academic realm. Another factor that contributes to the LLC members' academic success is the common curriculum or cohort model, in which members of the community are in the same courses. The members not only develop friendships as a result of being in the same classes, but also create opportunities to discuss the material outside the classroom, expanding the learner's knowledge. Kuh and Zhao (2004) found that a positive relationship existed between students who participated in learning communities and the integration of academic experiences contributing to members' success.

Research question #3: What impact do living-learning communities have on students' social and interpersonal skills?

Inkelas et al. (2007) noted that individuals who reside in a learning community tend to form a bond due to the residential and educational elements of the specialized

program. LLCs encourage members to interact with each other, which is essential for a shared academic experience and to create opportunities for engagement amongst the community members. Inkelas et al. (2006a) stated that living-learning programs construct occasions for students to be engaged in cultural and social programs that aid the student in developing skills in the area of self-awareness. LLCs help the student to grow socially and academically through the construction of a community that is focused on helping the student become a well-rounded learner and contributor to the educational setting.

Research question #4: What are the persistence, retention, and graduation rates for students who participate in LLCs?

Kelsey and Sexton (2003) noted that students who participated in the specialized community have a higher retention rate than traditional residence hall members who resided in the same facility. Kuh and Zhao (2004) found that students who resided in a learning community were likely to have higher GPAs and social experience, which leads to a positive perception of the college environment. Students are more likely to continue their education at the institution if they have a connection with the college, which leads to increased persistence, retention, and graduation rates. Ensign concluded that colleges can increase their graduation rates by focusing on likely dropouts, increasing advising services, having diverse voices on retention committees, and making logistical changes that adapt to the needs of the learner.

Limitations and Assumptions

One significant limitation of the study is that there are not many community colleges that offer residential student housing. The information collected for this study has not been tested in a community college setting that offers student housing; however,

the best practices being explored in higher education were analyzed for this study.
Content provided for this study was based on practices implemented in four-year
institutions with student housing and have not been tested in a community college setting.
Another limitation of the LLC initiative is that the vetting process for the members who
participate in the community could skew the results of the overall effectiveness of the
program. The suggestive model is a construct focused on attributes that are geared toward
student success to help the learner obtain the academic and personal goals they
established for themselves, which may vary from the institutional goals for the student,
i.e., certificate program versus associate degree program. In addition, it should be noted
that LLCs are often voluntary and/or have specific admission criteria that could skew
academic performance.

Assumptions closely related to LLCs include members of those specialized
communities who tend to perform scholastically better in the classroom than non-
members. Due to the study not being implemented in a community college setting with a
residential cohort, the assumption is unfounded. The assumption that LLC members have
a greater rapport with faculty is unfounded; however, it should be noted that students who
have a greater rapport with their instructors tend to perform better academically than
students who have a lower rapport with their instructor.

Future Recommendations

The recommendations for the future advancement of LLCs in community colleges
that offer residential housing are: dedicated housing staff, reserved living space,
committed faculty, and students who want to enhance their personal and academic skills.

The key to having a successful community is ensuring that the housing/residential staff are committed to student success. The housing/residential life staff are the first individuals LLC members meet when they arrive on campus, so it is pertinent that these members have the best interest of the student and the community in mind. Investment in the learning community is not a commodity but a lifestyle, which is why those internal stakeholders in the housing realm are the backbone for the success or failure of the program.

Another requirement for success of the living-learning initiative is that the college must dedicate a floor or section of a building for all the community members to reside together. The location where the members are placed must have designated space for the members to discuss course content, so the learner can expand his/her academic knowledge beyond the classroom setting. The designated area must have the necessary resources for accommodations to be made if a student has an undiagnosed learning disability or medical issue that was not discovered until the learner arrived on campus. Learners have to feel supported by and connected to the residential setting if they are going to be successful in their academic venture at the institution.

The third area that must be addressed for the implementation of the initiative is engaged and active faculty. Faculty must be willing to have office hours and meet with students at times that might not be convenient for their schedules but are beneficial toward the needs of the students. Students that have a strong rapport with their faculty are more likely to perform better in the classroom, so faculty have to be willing to engage students in a setting that is comfortable for the student.

The last step in the implementation of a successful LLC initiative is attracting students who are excited and committed to learning academically and developing socially. LLCs are not a one-size-fits-all community; those who are members of the community must be willing to get out of their comfort zone if the initiative is going to be successful. Students who want to be part of the LLC initiative have to self-identify to be part of the initiative and cannot be placed in the community by institutional members. Members who self-identify to be part of the program are more likely to benefit from the tools of the program than those who are placed in the program at random; personal accountability is key for educational/personal success.

Lastly, for the LLC initiative to be successful, it must have buy-in from all institutional key stakeholders from the bottom to the top of the educational hierarchy. For any initiative to be successful, everyone must strive for the same goal, which is learner success. Focusing on a common goal ensures that the focus is not on personal achievement, but on the betterment and educational aptitude of the engaged learner.

Conclusion

There are many community colleges in the United States; however, many community colleges do not offer residential housing. If one compares the persistence, retention, and graduation rates between four-year institutions and their two-year counterparts, the disparity between the rates is very noticeable. This study is just a small contribution to the field of residence life, especially for community colleges that provide housing for their students on their campuses. The information presented will assist

housing departments in formulating topics to discuss as it pertains to assisting residential students in meeting their academic and personal goals.

Even though the suggested model proposed in this study has not been implemented, it provides tangible information and resources to consider for implementation of an LLC. However, it should be noted that learning communities pride themselves on student engagement and connectivity with the institution. Individuals that view the institution more favorably are more likely to persist and graduate at higher rates than persons who do not have a relationship with the educational entity. LLCs can provide connectivity between the institution and the student by providing resources and opportunities that will aid the student in completing his/her educational pathway, which equates to student success. These specialized communities are very successful on four-year campuses due to the larger faculty and staff population available for implementation of the initiative. The community college, on the other hand, has limited resources (funding, housing, endowed fellowships), but if the implementation of this initiative can assist a community college entity that is struggling in the area of persistence, retention, and graduation rates, then this study has accomplished its goal.

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Questions? customercare@copyright.com or +1-855-239-3415 (toll free in the US) or +1-978-646-2777.

APPENDIX

B: PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR LLC PARTICIPANTS (SAMPLE)

Personal Development Plan

Name:

What are five personal goals you have for yourself over the next 30 days? (short term goals)

    1.

    2.

    3.

    4.

    5.

What are five personal goals that you have for yourself over the next 90 days? (intermediate term goals)

    1.

    2.

    3.

    4.

    5.

What are five personal goals that you have for yourself over the next year? (long term goals)

    1.

    2.

    3.

    4.

    5.

What are your five greatest strengths/skills/values as a person?

    1.

    2.

    3.

    4.

    5.

What are five areas of your academic, personal, or professional life that you are struggling in and need assistance?

    1.

    2.

    3.

    4.

    5.

What are five professional goals you want to accomplish for yourself in the next 10 years?

    1.

    2.

    3.

    4.

    5.

Personal Development Plan

What are five goals that you want to accomplish as a result of being involved with the Living-Learning Community (LLC)?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

When you have completed all the goals that you have established for yourself, what is going to be your legacy or contribution to society?

APPENDIX

C: WEEKLY SCHEDULE (SAMPLE)

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
5:00 am							
5:30 am							
6:00 am							
6:30 am							
7:00 am							
7:30 am							
8: 00 am							
8:30 am							
9:00 am							
9:30 am							
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9:30 pm							
10:00 pm							
10:30 pm							
11:00 pm							
11:30 pm							

APPENDIX

D: LLC APPLICATION

LLC Application

1) Name:

2) Cell phone/telephone number:

3) Email address:

4) Date of birth:

5) High school/GED achievement date:

6) Prior higher educational experience? If so, where and for how long?

7) Position and responsibilities of sports, clubs, and organizations that you have been involved with in the last three years:

8) Major/minor:

9) Interests/hobbies:

10) Which gender do you personally identify with?

11) Do you need any special housing accommodations? If an accommodation is needed please specify: (Yes/No)

12) Please define in the space listed below why you want to be part of the living-learning community. You may attach an additional sheet if the space provided below is not sufficient.

13) What does the term "community" mean to you?

14) What contributions will you make to the Living-Learning Community? (Please explain below.)

I agree that the information provided in the application is accurate and truthful to the best of my knowledge. I understand that any false information provided can impact my status in the living-learning community. I also agree to fully participate and engage in the LLC community initiatives and activities of the program or I may be removed from the program for failure to participate in organized activities and non-compliance with the institutional Student Code of Conduct and Housing/Residence Life policies.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX

E: CONSEQUENCES FOR NON-COMPLIANCE WITH LLC INITIATIVES

Consequences for Non-compliance with LLC Initiatives for Student Participants

1. If a participant chooses not to attend a mandatory activity or event, the student will receive a verbal warning from the Coordinator or Program Director, which will be noted in the student's housing personnel file.

2. If the participant misses two mandatory activities or events during any given semester, the student will receive a written warning from the Coordinator or Program Director, which will be noted in the student's housing personnel file.

3. If a participant misses three mandatory activities or events during any given semester, the student will be removed from the program and relocated from the specialized residential community designated housing area.

4. All decisions of the Coordinator or Program Director are final.

APPENDIX

F: POST-ASSESSMENT TOOL

Living-Learning Community Post-assessment Survey

Instructions: Please answer each question in its entirety. The survey will only take ten minutes of your time. Please make sure to mail in the enclosed envelope so you can be entered into the drawing for a $250.00 Visa Gift Card. Once again, thank you for your time and assistance in completion of this survey.

Question 1: Do you live on campus? (If you answered yes, please proceed to Question 2. If you answered no, please continue no further and thank you for participating in the survey.)
- o Yes
- o No

Question 2: Are you a member of a living-learning community? (Living-learning community is defined as a community where on-campus students are actively involved in a residential cohort model designed to help with educational pursuits and non-academic interests.)
- o Yes
- o No

Question 3: What is your gender?
- o Female
- o Male
- o Transgender
- o Other: (please specify)_____

Question 4: How many semesters have you resided in on-campus housing? (Choose one)
- o 0-1
- o 2-3
- o 4-5
- o 5-6
- o 7 or more semesters

Question 5: Do you find the environment in your on-campus residential facility conducive to your educational needs?
- o Yes
- o No

Please answer the following questions as they relate to your responses from the previous question:

How satisfied are you with the residential environment that you are currently residing in? (Please fill in the circle that best corresponds with your response.)

5a. Ability to study in your room/suite

- o Very Satisfied
- o Satisfied
- o Neutral
- o Dissatisfied
- o Very Dissatisfied

5b. Noise level of your suite/floor
- o Very Satisfied
- o Satisfied
- o Neutral
- o Dissatisfied
- o Very Dissatisfied

5c. Locations in the residential facility to study (lounges, rooms, i.e., places designated for study)
- o Very Satisfied
- o Satisfied
- o Neutral
- o Dissatisfied
- o Very Dissatisfied

Question 6: What were the reasons you decided to reside on campus? (Please select one response.)
- o Cost
- o Mandatory (required by the institution to reside on campus)
- o Opportunity to meet new people
- o Diversity (meet people who come from a different background or culture)
- o Other (please specify):

  _____

Question 7: Why did you decide to be a member of the living-learning community?
- o Mandatory (required by the institution as a requirement to reside in the residential facility)
- o Parental influence
- o Opportunity to live and study with peers who share common educational interests
- o Help navigating the institution
- o Other (please specify):

  _____

Question 8: Were the outcomes/requirements of the living-learning program explained to you?
- o Yes
- o No

Question 9: Average hours you spend per week on activities (i.e., study hall, programs, and study groups) associated with the living-learning community:

- o 0-3
- o 4-6
- o 7-9
- o 10 or more

Question 10: What was your high school grade point average?
- o Below 2.0
- o 2.1 to 2.5
- o 2.6 to 3.0
- o 3.1 to 3.5
- o 3.6 to 4.0

Question 11: What is your current college grade point average?
- o Below 2.0
- o 2.1 to 2.5
- o 2.6 to 3.0
- o 3.1 to 3.5
- o 3.6 to 4.0

Question 12: Has the living-learning community been beneficial in helping you transition to the institution? Why/why not? (Please explain below.)

Question 13: Did the living-learning community provide you with the tools needed for academic success? Why/why not? (Please explain below.)

Question 14: Average number of hours you study per week during the academic semester?
- o 0-3
- o 4-6
- o 7-9
- o 10-12
- o 12 or more

Question 15: What is your ethnic group?
- o Black/African American
- o Native American
- o Asian/Middle Eastern/Pacific Islander
- o Spanish/Hispanic/Latino(a)
- o White Caucasian
- o Multiracial
- o Other (please specify): _____