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Published by the Association of College & University Housing Officers - International
Greetings, good colleagues of ACUHO-I.

Thank you for the confidence you have placed in me as the new editor of The Journal of College and University Student Housing. I look forward to working with all of you, and to continuing the tradition of publishing strong applied scholarship established by previous editors and Journal Board members. I especially want to recognize the work of immediate past-editor Tony Cawthon, and thank him for generously sharing his expertise with me and with ACUHO-I through his tireless efforts with the Journal. Tony has made it easy for me to step in and move ahead with our new vision and plans for the Journal.

Our vision includes a special-topic focus for one of the Journal’s two issues a year. This first special issue centers on living-learning program research and practice and features Karen Inkelas of the University of Maryland-College Park as guest-editor. In 2001, Karen was awarded a Commissioned Research grant through ACUHO-I and since has been on the leading edge of research related to residential living-learning communities. Karen has done an amazing job selecting authors and research areas, setting a high standard for our Journal.

This issue has something of practical value for everyone – from the introduction to living-learning communities and applied research on alcohol use within living-learning programs, to the innovative assessment process to measure student learning in living-learning programs and the visionary piece on using technology within living-learning programs.

Processes to solicit topics and guest editors for future special issues are under way, and I invite you to contact me at pamclu2@ilstu.edu with your special topic ideas and suggestions in general.

The Journal’s next “regular” issue later in 2008 will contain a number of new features, including research related to best prac-
tices, assessment techniques, international perspectives, and historical trends. While we have asked several authors to address these different topics for our first non-topical issue, we invite all of our readers to submit articles for review and possible publication in future issues. If you have an idea or if you have presented your research at a conference, I am happy to talk with you about how you might turn that work into a publication for our Journal!

We also are looking for ACUHO-I members who want to make a contribution to the profession by reviewing and editing potential scholarship for publication. Applications for Reviewer and Associate Editor are due by May 1, 2008, and are available online at www.acuho-i.org.

Other important changes are under way. The Book Reviews and Trends/Point of View opinion articles will move to a Web site to allow for more frequent and regular publication, ensuring ACUHO-I members access to timely issues of importance. We also are working on an online discussion board, where members can dialogue with authors and share ideas and reactions to works published in the Journal. I am grateful to Kathy Hobgood, our ACUHO-I Executive Board liaison, and James Baumann, the ACUHO-I director of communications, for their support of and creative ideas to enhance the Journal.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to serve ACUHO-I, an association that has been an important part of my own professional development. I am open to your ideas and suggestions because I want this Journal to be the one where you find information or inspiration as you confront new opportunities and challenges in your work.

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I am open to your ideas and suggestions because I want this Journal to be the one where you find information or inspiration as you confront new opportunities and challenges in your work.
INRODUCTION

Innovative Directions for Living-Learning Program Research and Practice

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INNOVATIVE AND “FASHIONABLE” programs such as learning communities are not always viewed critically by administrators and may even be considered panaceas for longstanding problems. They may be implemented with the assumption that the benefits will inevitably accrue. Indeed, support for the concept of learning communities may be so strong that there is no evaluative burden of proof at all to show that it has a positive impact. (Jones, Laufgraben, & Morris, 2006, p. 263)

Although the above quotation concerns learning communities writ large, the same can be said about their conceptual cousin, the residential learning community, or living-learning program. Living-learning programs appear to embody everything higher education pundits advocate: They intentionally create small and intimate communities of membership; at their most optimal, they unite curricular, cocurricular, residential, and informal peer networks to augment student learning and development; and they often represent a partnership for learning between academic and student affairs units on college campuses. However, living-learning programs come in all shapes and sizes. Indeed, perhaps the only aspect all living-learning programs across the nation share is that they are primarily housed in residence halls. Otherwise, they vary in size, structure, mission, staffing, theme, funding, academic rigor, and a host of other facets.

The variation in living-learning programs is partly explained by their popularity as an educational intervention on U.S. college campuses. The online Residential Learning Communities International Registry (http://pcc.bgsu.edu/rlch/) includes more than 200 submissions, and the 2007 National Study of Living-Learning Programs assessed more than 600 programs. Thus, it’s no surprise, with hundreds of programs around the country, that living-learning programs take many forms.

Yet, while the number of living-learning programs continues to grow, the assessment and evaluation of these programs have not kept pace. To be sure, living-learning program research is evolving, but it is still very much in its formative years. Even the nation’s
With this special issue, we begin a new conversation by focusing on four critical questions regarding living-learning programs. I hope these questions will stimulate practitioners and scholars to engage in a dialogue about living-learning programs and the issues we must address to ensure the programs’ effectiveness for the future.

Matthew Soldner and Katalin Szelényi ask the first simple, yet profound question: What is a living-learning program? This question may appear straightforward, but is it? When one conjures an image of the prototypical living-learning program, what features does it have? Are there certain characteristics that must be present in order for a program to be able to call itself a “living-learning” program? Soldner and Szelényi analyze the structural and organizational features of more than 600 living-learning programs that participated in the 2007 NSLLP, and the results, I believe, will surprise some readers. The authors found a wide variation in the composition of today’s living-learning programs, and indeed, no distinct portrait of a living-learning program emerged. So, the article finishes where it began: What is a living-learning program? But, perhaps more importantly, it asks: Are the great differences in programs found across the country something to be concerned about, or something to celebrate?

One problem with the wide variation in living-learning programs is the inability to assess programs with both breadth and depth. The NSLLP, in an attempt to create an omnibus assessment tool that is appropriate for the broad range of living-learning programs in existence, can only examine basic patterns and general trends among its data. However, to
truly understand a program’s effectiveness in reaching stated goals and objectives, a customized assessment must be done. Furthermore, with multiple external stakeholders demanding greater accountability, program assessments and evaluation are becoming the norm instead of the exception. Thus, the second question explored in this special issue speaks to how individual programs can develop and maintain effective student learning assessment efforts. Greig Stewart, in his commentary, chronicles the process through which one living-learning program, the College Park Scholars Program, practitioners can learn valuable lessons on what worked and did not work for the College Park Scholars Program and perhaps model their unique assessment demands after its precedent.

Aaron Brower addresses a third question in his study of binge drinking and related alcohol behaviors: What other types of results can living-learning programs facilitate, other than their stated goals and objectives? In his study, Brower found that living-learning program participation promoted more healthy decision-making and behaviors among undergraduates. It is important to underscore that nearly all of the living-learning programs in the NSLLP (and, correspondingly, Brower’s study) were not explicitly designed to focus on binge drinking behaviors, yet Brower’s results show that living-learning participants drank less and suffered from fewer adverse alcohol-related events. Brower asserts that this relationship is due to a community of learning formed in living-learning programs that supplants a drinking culture with one of personal and community responsibility. Brower introduces a tantalizing thought: Are other unintentional outcomes set in motion by the community of learning established through living-learning programs?

Finally, Bill Zeller propels us squarely into the 21st century by asking about the role of technology in the living-learning program of the future. First, Zeller argues that living-learning programs are ideally situated as locations for learning through the infusion of technological resources in the residence hall. He draws connections between students’ preferred ways of interacting, residence hall infrastructures, and conditions for optimal learning. Then, he makes concrete recommendations for ways
in which living-learning programs can install and integrate technology to best serve their objectives.

Together, I hope that these works foster sustained reflection on the advancement of living-learning programs. I believe that the contributions to the special issue point to a need for the next generation of scholarship and practice to embark upon some of the unresolved issues in the living-learning arena. For example:

- Should there be a consistent definition of and, perhaps, set of standards for a living-learning program?
- How can individual living-learning program assessments raise the efficacy of the programs and facilitate student learning and development?
- What are all of the outcomes of participation in a living-learning program, including those that are known but not yet empirically tested and those that still remain unknown?
- And, finally, how must living-learning programs adjust in relation to changing student needs and emerging technological tools for advanced learning?

I look forward to tackling these issues with you in the years to come.
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A National Portrait of Today's Living-Learning Programs

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FOUND AT DOZENS, if not hundreds, of colleges and universities across the United States, living-learning programs have emerged as one of many institutional responses to calls for strengthening the undergraduate educational experience, delivering supportive services targeted to particular populations, and recruiting high-talent students (Lenning & Ebbers, 1999; Shapiro & Levine, 1999). Until recently, however, scholars had conducted little systematic research into these programs, and what was known came largely from single-program or single-institution evaluation efforts (Inkelas & Weisman, 2003). Further complicating our understanding, neither theoretical nor empirical efforts have employed a consistent definition of the practices or structures that define living-learning programs (Blimling, 1993; Shapiro & Levine, 1999).

The National Study of Living Learning Programs (NSLLP), a multiyear, multi-institutional study begun in 2004, has the potential to remedy both shortfalls (Inkelas, Brower, & Associates, 2004). To account for a wide range of living-learning arrangements found at U.S. colleges and universities, the NSLLP opened participation in its study to any postsecondary institution that defined its programs through the following liberal definition: Programs in which undergraduate students live together in a discrete portion of a residence hall (or the entire hall) and participate in academic and/or extracurricular programming designed especially for them. While a generous definition of living-learning programs works well when practitioners or researchers wish to identify the entirety of the possible “population” for further study, Inkelas, Soldner, Longerbeam, and Brown Leonard (in press) have suggested that it may be less helpful when we wish to ask specific questions about a particular type of intervention’s efficacy. Similarly, Inkelas et al. (in press) have argued that more specific definitions for what constitutes a living-learning program may be helpful to practitioners seeking to design
new or refine existing programmatic efforts. Similarly, understanding which elements of living-learning programming appear to be most effective in facilitating student outcomes can be beneficial for practitioners seeking to advocate for additional or augmented resources.

With this in mind, in the pages that follow, we offer an investigation of the programmatic and structural characteristics of today’s living-learning programs and conclude by suggesting an important question to be answered by future research: What constitutes a living-learning program? Or, more specifically, do particular facets of residential education efforts exist that are necessary for a program to be termed “living-learning”?

THE NSLLP

Concerned about a dearth of information about the effectiveness of living-learning programs despite their seemingly widespread popularity, principal investigator Karen Kurotsuchi Inkelas at the University of Maryland and co-principal investigator Aaron Brower at the University of Wisconsin began the NSLLP in the fall of 2001 with funding from the Association of College and University Housing Officers-International (ACUHO-I) (Inkelas et al., 2004). In 2004, 34 institutions participated in the NSLLP, each selecting a full or random sample of students participating in living-learning programs and a demographically matched comparison sample of students living in traditional residence halls. By the study’s completion, almost 24,000 students had responded, and institutions had provided information on nearly 300 programs.

Each respondent completed a 275-question instrument known as the Residence Environment Survey (RES). Besides gathering basic demographic data, the RES asked respondents to provide information about their precollege expectations, their collegiate experiences, and their perceived growth on a number of important learning outcomes. Simultaneously, administrators at the same institutions were completing the Living-Learning Programs Survey (LLPS), an instrument consisting of 30 items. The LLPS sought information about programs’ goals and objectives, their organizational characteristics and staffing patterns, and their academic and cocurricular offerings. Both student and staff respondents completed their instruments via the Web.

In 2005, the NSLLP again received support from ACUHO-I, as well as the National Science Foundation, the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), and College Student Educators International (ACPA) to conduct a longitudinal follow-up with first-year respondents from 2004 and to collect baseline data on a new cohort of students. In 2007, more than 1,500 fourth-year students at 16 institutions participated in the longitudinal study, along with a new group of more than 22,000 students of all class levels at 46 institutions. Five additional institutions provided LLPS data, but were unable to complete student data collection, bringing the number of participating colleges and universities to 51. As in 2004, students completed the RES, and institutional contacts completed the
LLPS, both of which had undergone revisions before being deployed via the Web.

Given the focus of this article on the programmatic and structural characteristics of living-learning programs, the analyses in this study rely on data from the 613 living-learning programs included in the 2007 LLPS. Readers interested in learning more about findings from the 2004 study are encouraged to review the work of Inkelas et al. (in press) or visit the study Web site, http://www.livelearnstudy.net. We begin by cataloging the diversity of living-learning programs nationwide, examining such features as programs’ administrative and organizational characteristics and programmatic approaches to promoting student learning. Then, we turn our attention to identifying trends within contemporary living-learning program design and implementation.

Might the youth of the living-learning programs in the 2007 NSLLP suggest that they are simply the latest “fad” to hit higher education, especially at large, public institutions? Indeed, there is reason to believe that the pace of program development may actually be quickening ...

The Growth of Living-Learning Programs

The institutions that participated in the 2007 NSLLP offered more than 600 living-learning programs, collectively. All institutions were predominantly White, and all but one, publicly controlled. Shapiro and Levine (1999) have suggested that a common purpose of living-learning programs is to reduce large institutions to a more human scale and, given the characteristics of our participating colleges and universities, this may indeed be the case. The majority of institutions in our study (23) were Carnegie “research-very high” institutions, 15 were “research-high” institutions, and 4 institutions were “research” institutions. Finally, 9 schools were either master’s or baccalaureate institutions. In addition, irrespective of their location, most of the living-learning programs were relatively new to their campuses. Almost 17% of programs surveyed were in their first year of operation, and 38% of programs had been in existence for two to four years. Almost 29% of programs were between 5 and 9 years old, with the remaining 16% of programs marking their 10th (or later) year.

Might the youth of the living-learning programs in the 2007 NSLLP suggest that they are simply the latest “fad” to hit higher education, especially at large, public institutions? Indeed, there is reason to believe that the pace of program development may actually be quickening: External pressures for improving undergraduate education continue to rise (National Leadership Council, 2007; The Secretary of Education’s Commission on the Future of Higher Education, 2006), the practitioner literature has touted the benefits of learning communities for more than a decade (Laufgraben, Shapiro, & Associates, 2004;
Lenning & Ebbers, 1999; Shapiro & Levine, 1999), and the popular press has begun to feature living-learning programs as “best practices” in undergraduate education (Bonisteel, 2006; Foderaro, 2005; Thomson Peterson’s, 2006). It is important to remember, however, that several long-standing examples of living-learning programs do exist, including those at institutions such as Michigan State University, the University of Michigan, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

**BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF LIVING-LEARNING PROGRAMS**

If so many programs are at larger institutions, how have they fared in creating the smaller, more intimate learning spaces for which living-learning scholars have advocated (Inkelas et al., 2004; Lenning & Ebbers, 1999; Shapiro & Levine, 1999)? The median living-learning enrollment in the 2007 NSLLP was 52 students, with 50 students being the modal response. The 25th and 75th percentile saw enrollments of 29 and 150, respectively, with 11 programs evidencing enrollments of more than 1,000 students.

With most programs housing approximately 50 students, it appears the majority of living-learning programs can be contained by one traditional residence hall floor of the double-loaded corridor design. Indeed, approximately 71% of programs were housed within a discrete, reserved portion of one residence hall. Typically, these halls had living-learning and non-living-learning floors (53%), although some programs were housed within all-living-learning buildings (18%). A smaller number of programs, approximately 17%, filled an

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entire residence hall. Other residence arrangements are comparatively infrequent, with 8% of programs reporting a unique arrangement, 2% of programs filling two or more residence halls, and 1% of programs housing students on campus but not within the same community.

Because, by definition, campus residence halls house living-learning programs, default “ownership” of living-learning programs may appear to fall naturally on divisions of student affairs. However, such may not always be the case. Indeed, collaborations and resources shared between student affairs and academic affairs units are often considered among the most important factors in their success (Inkelas et al., in press; Laufgraben et al., 2004; Schoem, 2004; Schroeder, Minor, & Tarkow, 1999; Shapiro & Levine, 1999). The 2007 NSLLP suggests institutions have placed their living-learning programs in a variety of locations on their campus organizational charts.

As noted in Table 1, the overwhelming majority of programs reported to just one office on campus. For 47% of programs, that office was residential life. Only 8% of programs reported solely to an academic department (e.g., history), 7% solely to an academic affairs unit (e.g., the provost’s office), and 1% solely to a student affairs unit. The remaining 37% of programs reported to multiple offices, with the most frequently occurring combinations being residential life and an academic department (15%) and residential life and an academic affairs unit (11%). The most unique reporting arrangements were to a Reserve Officer’s Training Corps office (n=1) and international education/studies offices (n=3).

In most cases, responsibility for day-to-day program direction was left to a single staff person (58% of the time). Although directors came from multiple offices across campus, given the findings above, it is not surprising that staff from residential life (43%) most frequently led living-learning programs. Staff from academic departments were the second most likely to be responsible for directing living-learning programs (21%), followed by codirector models that used residential life and academic department staff (13%) and multiperson boards (8%). Other less frequent arrangements are outlined in Table 1.

Of course, just the fact that a staff member is assigned program direction responsibilities does not mean that it is a substantial component of his or her portfolio. Among living-learning programs with just one director, only 38% had more than half of directors’ time dedicated to the program, and only 7% had program direction as a sole responsibility. For programs with more than one director, the median full-time equivalency (FTE) for the second staff member was 0.10, and only 25% of programs had second directors with FTEs greater than 0.33.

Dedicating staff and programmatic resources (like those described later in this article) to living-learning programs costs money. The amount institutions spent on the operation of their living-learning programs varies widely however. While the average cost per institution was slightly more than $21,000, the median living-learning budget nationwide was only $5,000. That 10% of programs had no budget and 25% of programs had budgets of less than $1,000 may be surprising to some readers: The average room charge of institutions participating in the 2007 NSLLP was nearly $4,300, suggesting that the gross revenue generated by...
housing five resident students supported the typical living-learning program.

Not all living-learning programs are funded directly by student housing monies (see Table 1). While 51% of living-learning programs did report that housing or student affairs monies supported them wholly, cost-sharing arrangements did exist. Twenty-four percent of programs were jointly funded (16% predominantly by housing or student affairs and 8% predominantly by academic affairs), and 13% received half their monies from both divisions. Academic affairs bore sole responsibility for funding only 7% of living-learning programs in our study. Interestingly, seven programs reported that grants funded their efforts, either in whole or in part.

Some living-learning programs have adopted an alternative funding model: charging students additional fees for participation. Almost 23% of programs reported collecting fees from residents, although 33% of those that did so charged their students less than $100 per year. As noted in Table 1, 25% of programs charged $200 or more; 18%, $300 or more; and 11%, $500 or more. Only seven programs collected more than $700 from participants, with the highest reported fee set at $750 per year at one institution.

Besides their funding structures, living-learning programs also showed considerable variation in their criteria for admitting students. More than half of programs (56%) were, in some way, selective. Most selective programs relied on an application (73%), an essay (51%), or having declared a particular major (27%).

Given the costs borne by both institutions and students for offering or participating in living-learning programs and the variety of admission criteria in place, what educational benefits might they hope to accrue? The 2007 NSLLP asked each program to rate the importance of students’ attainment of 15 typical collegiate learning outcomes. The following five outcomes were rated by at least 50% of institutions as being “very important” goals of participation: (a) experiencing a smoother academic transition to college (55%); (b) feeling a sense of belonging to the institution (54%); (c) dem-
onstrating an openness to views different from their own (52%); (d) learning about others different from themselves (50%); and (e) experiencing a smoother social transition to college (50%). The outcomes least commonly reported as “very important” were promoting volunteerism (17%) and alcohol-related wellness (20%).

THE CURRICULAR AND COCURRICULAR FEATURES OF LIVING-LEARNING PROGRAMS

Once admitted to a living-learning program, it is the unique educational activities in which students engage that are believed to help promote learning. How a program fuses students’ curricular and cocurricular activities is of particular importance and involves a number of program features including course offerings; the use of faculty, staff, and peer leadership; required or optional activities; and the provision of special residence hall resources (Inkelas & Weisman, 2003; Laufgraben, Shapiro, & Associates, 2004; Shapiro & Levine, 1999). Each of these is described below.

How programs integrate curricular components into the larger living-learning experience can vary widely. First, it should be noted that more than half of all programs – 52% – did not include any form of academic coursework. The remainder employed a variety of strategies that mixed four types of courses: (a) courses designed just for the living-learning curriculum; (b) sections of introductory-level courses reserved for living-learning participants; (c) general university courses open to all; and (d) noncredit seminars. Most common was the use of specially designed living-learning courses (11%) or a combination of the three credit-bearing options (9%). Reliance on just noncredit options was rare (1%). The majority of programs that did provide courses offered fewer than three: 28% provided one; 14% offered two; and 12% offered three. However, 6% offered more than 15 courses, and 1% offered more than 20.

There was also substantial diversity in how faculty, student affairs staff members, and graduate and undergraduate students participated in the fulfillment of program tasks (see Table 2). Twenty-three percent of programs had no faculty involvement of any kind, while 64% reported working with one to three faculty members. Besides teaching, uses of faculty time throughout the year included putting on workshops for students (in 94% of programs using faculty), faculty mentorship (92%), attendance at social events (90%), serving on advisory boards (71%), and academic advising (62%). In comparison, student affairs staff members...
were heavily involved in the functioning of the living-learning programs in our study. Eighty-five percent of programs used student affairs staff in some manner, most frequently to conduct traditional residence education functions. Specifically, 90% of student affairs staff associated with living-learning programs had live-in roles and 73% supervised resident assistants. Other frequent uses of student affairs staff included handling program administrative tasks (in 94% of programs using student affairs staff), attending social events (78%), mentorship (76%), serving on advisory boards and putting on workshops (both 73%), and eating with students (72%).

Slightly more than a third (39%) of living-learning programs in our study employed graduate students in some capacity. Almost 94% of programs with graduate student staff used graduate students as mentors, followed by tasks such as dining with residents (87%) and socializing with residents (85%). Graduate students were also responsible for handling administrative tasks (86%), leading workshops (79%), or offering service-learning activities (69%). Finally, the overwhelming majority of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Roles of Program Staff (When Staff Exist)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>% using faculty</th>
<th>% using student affairs staff</th>
<th>% using graduate students</th>
<th>% using undergraduate students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Involvement</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 - 3</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - 5</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 - 10</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 11</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activities</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On advisory board?</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live in community?</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervise RAs?</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic advising?</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentors?</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend social events?</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eat with students?</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put on workshops?</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead service learning?</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutor?</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have administrative tasks?</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
programs – 84% – reported having identified leadership roles for undergraduate students. Ninety-four percent of undergraduate involvement was related to live-in responsibilities, suggesting most programs relied on these students to serve as resident assistants. Indeed, peer mentorship was the most frequently identified undergraduate role in living-learning programs (in 97% of programs using undergraduate staff). Other tasks involved eating with or socializing with students (both 95%), administrative responsibilities (75%), and leading workshops (73%). Finally, 56% of programs using undergraduate staff reported having them serve on their advisory boards.

As can be seen above, faculty, staff, and student leaders associated with living-learning programs fulfill a wide range of responsibilities, including providing curricular and cocurricular activities. The 2007 NSLLP asked programs to indicate which of 20 activities common to living-learning programs they offered, and whether student participation in those activities was optional or required. These are summarized in Table 3. The most frequently offered activity across all programs was attendance at cultural outings (offered by 87.7%), which was required by almost 9% of programs and optional at 79%. Other activities that were frequently made available to living-learning program participants included academic advising, arts programs, and multicultural programs.
learning participants were (a) multicultural programs (offered by 86%); (b) study groups (81%); (c) team-building activities (79%); (d) noncredit service learning (78%); and (e) career workshops (74%). The least frequently offered activities were research projects (27%) or capstone experiences (17%). Attendance at program orientation was the most frequently required activity of all participants (23%), while participation in intramural sports was the least frequently required (0.3%).

An important question, given these differences in living-learning programming, is whether the variation in program structures is random or systematic. Is, for example, the level of available funding related to the number of courses offered, or does a relationship exist between reporting structures and the involvement of faculty members in living-learning programs? While the list of questions querying these relationships is extensive, we have chosen to focus on a selection of program characteristics, including number and type of courses offered, faculty involvement, goals for participants, age of program, available funding, and reporting structures.

**Course Offerings**

Table 4 highlights the availability of four types of courses offered by living-learning programs in light of funding patterns, age of program, and reporting structures. Not surprisingly, the level of program funding appeared to play a key role in the availability of some types of courses. This was especially true in the case of those taught by living-learning programs, special introductory classes, and general university courses. In a notable example, only 14.9% of living-learning programs with no budgets offered their own living-learning courses, compared to 69.3% of programs with funding of more than $30,000. The corresponding percentages for special introductory courses were 6.8% and 51.2% and for general university classes, 4.7% and 50.6%. Interestingly, however, increased levels of funding were not always related to the availability of these three types of courses when considering the intermediate funding categories. Among programs with budgets of $1,001 to $5,000, for example, only 13.3% offered their own living-learning courses, and 11.4% made available special introductory courses, both percentages being lower than in...
program with budgets of $1 to $1,000 (26.7% and 24.4%, respectively). In addition, noncredit courses were not tied to the level of funding in any systematic manner, with programs budgeting between $1,001 and $5,000 the most likely to offer these classes (15.9%). It is important to underscore, however, that noncredit courses were the least popular curricular offerings in the 2007 NSLLP.

In general, living-learning programs in existence for more than 15 years were more likely to offer courses of all four types than the newest programs. This is far from surprising since the implementation of curricula undoubtedly warrants lengthy preparation. In the case of courses taught by living-learning programs and special introductory courses, we see a steady increase in the availability of courses as we move from the newest to the oldest programs. When it came to general university courses, however, we found little difference among new and middle-aged programs, with the availability of these courses ranging from 22.2% to 25.2% in the first three age categories. Only in programs in existence for at least 10 years did we see a jump in general university

### Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding patterns</th>
<th>Courses taught by living-learning program</th>
<th>Special introductory courses</th>
<th>General university courses</th>
<th>Noncredit courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No budget</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1 to $1,000</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1,001 to $5,000</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$5,001 to $30,000</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over $30,000</td>
<td>69.3</td>
<td>51.2</td>
<td>50.6</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of program</th>
<th>Courses taught by living-learning program</th>
<th>Special introductory courses</th>
<th>General university courses</th>
<th>Noncredit courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 year or less</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 to 4 years</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 9 years</td>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 to 14 years</td>
<td>61.8</td>
<td>52.9</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 15 years</td>
<td>56.7</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>63.3</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporting structures</th>
<th>Courses taught by living-learning program</th>
<th>Special introductory courses</th>
<th>General university courses</th>
<th>Noncredit courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residence life only</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department only</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>56.3</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic affairs only</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>64.5</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence life and department</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence life and academic affairs</td>
<td>44.7</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
course offerings, with 50% percent of 10- to 14-year-old programs and 63.3% of programs older than 15 years listing these courses. And finally, the oldest programs were significantly more likely than any of the newer programs to make noncredit courses available to their students.

Living-learning programs reporting to individual academic departments or academic affairs offices were the most likely to offer their own courses, special introductory courses, and general university courses. In two important examples, as many as 87.5% of programs supervised by individual departments and 80% of those under the direction of academic affairs offices had designed and taught their own courses. By contrast, when residence life offices were supervising living-learning programs, only 16.4% had developed their own courses. However, when residence life offices partnered with either academic departments or academic affairs offices in administering living-learning programs, 27.6% and 44.7%, respectively, taught program-developed classes. Such differences in course offerings by reporting structures are a striking demonstration of the key leadership role played by various organizational units in the programmatic direction of living-learning programs (Schroeder & Hurst, 1996; Schroder, Minor, & Tarkow, 1999). While these findings are not surprising, given that various institutional units have traditionally assumed different roles on campus, it is striking to note the important ways in which partnerships among residence life units and more academically oriented institutional structures bring an enhanced curricular emphasis to living-learning programs.

Faculty Involvement

Interestingly, the level of funding available had little systematic relationship with the involvement of faculty members (see Table 5). For example, while 8.2% of programs with no budget had at least six faculty members, no programs with budgets of $1,001 to $5,000 and $5,001 to $30,000 had six or more faculty. However, of programs with funding of more than $30,000, 24.1% had six or more faculty members. In general, it appears that budgets of at least $30,000 are needed to attract the participation of a large number of faculty.

Program age played a more important role in faculty involvement, with older programs, especially those that have been in existence for more than 15 years, more likely to attract six or more faculty members (41.4%) than their...
younger counterparts. Of programs developed 10 to 14 years before the administration of the NSLLP, 17.6% boasted the involvement of more than six faculty, compared with 4.3% of the newest programs and just 1.9% of programs in existence for 2 to 4 years. Interestingly, however, lack of faculty involvement was not as strongly linked to program age, with percentages ranging from 19.5% in programs of 2 to 4 years of age to 28.6% in programs in existence for less than 1 year. It is important to note that around three-quarters of all programs, regardless of their age, were successful at recruiting at least one faculty member to participate. Faculty involvement, however, often remained restricted to that one professor in the two age categories indicating the newest programs (around 45%).

The involvement of six or more faculty members was most commonly found in programs reporting to academic affairs offices (30%), followed by those reporting to an academic department (18.8%). By contrast, only 4.5% of programs supervised by residence life offices had six or more faculty members. These findings are not surprising given the emphasis on course-related learning advanced by academic affairs units and academic de-

### Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding patterns</th>
<th>No faculty</th>
<th>One faculty</th>
<th>Two to five faculty</th>
<th>Six or more faculty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No budget</td>
<td>34.7</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1 to $1,000</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>42.2</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1,001 to $5,000</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>56.1</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>$5,001 to $30,000</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over $30,000</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>24.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of program</th>
<th>No faculty</th>
<th>One faculty</th>
<th>Two to five faculty</th>
<th>Six or more faculty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 year or less</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>45.7</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 to 4 years</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>44.7</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 9 years</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 to 14 years</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 15 years</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>41.4</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporting structures</th>
<th>No faculty</th>
<th>One faculty</th>
<th>Two to five faculty</th>
<th>Six or more faculty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Residence life only</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department only</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic affairs only</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence life and department</td>
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<td>45.8</td>
<td>22.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Residence life and academic affairs</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
partments. It appears that when these offices fulfill a supervisory role, they are able to bring that academic emphasis to the living-learning programs. However, interesting to note is the fact that the likelihood of involving at least six faculty members in programs reporting to residence life was only raised to 6.8% in the presence of a supervisory partnership with an academic department, and 10.4% when an academic affairs office was also involved. These findings thus suggest that living-learning programs reporting – either exclusively or partially – to residence life offices are not well-positioned for attracting the involvement of a larger pool of faculty. While the reasons underlying this trend are not reflected in our data, it is possible that residence life offices simply lack the connections to faculty across the institution or do not employ effective strategies of reaching out to professors.

Program Goals for Undergraduates: Do Courses and Faculty Involvement Matter?

Our final set of analyses examined possible linkages between the availability of living-learning-taught courses and faculty involvement and 10 selected program goals for undergraduates (see Table 6). Our interest here is in whether a stronger focus on academics, as reflected in the development of courses taught by living-learning programs and the number of faculty participants, led to more emphasis on various educational goals for students. Our findings related to courses indicate that living-learning programs’ investment in teaching their own classes to students was accompanied by a generally stronger articulation of educational goals. With the exception of the goal of helping students to develop a greater enjoyment of challenging intellectual pursuits, programs with self-designed and self-taught courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals for Undergraduates (indicated as “very important”)</th>
<th>Courses taught by living-learning program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not offered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer and/or perform community service</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apply something learned in one class to another</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate growth in developing values</td>
<td>26.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate growth in ability to critically analyze ideas</td>
<td>26.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn about people from diverse backgrounds</td>
<td>46.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate openness to diverse views</td>
<td>46.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop greater enjoyment of challenging intellectual pursuits</td>
<td>47.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience a smoother social transition</td>
<td>49.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience a smoother academic transition</td>
<td>49.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel a sense of belonging to the institution</td>
<td>50.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
were more likely to emphasize the goals for undergraduates we examined. The most notable example is the goal of helping students to develop growth in their ability to critically analyze ideas: While 26.6% of programs with no self-taught courses espoused this objective as “very important” for their participants, 44.7% of programs offering these courses indicated that this goal was “very important.”

With regard to differences in the importance of educational goals by faculty involvement (Table 7), our findings were only consistent when comparing programs with two to five faculty members and those with six or more faculty. The largest differences existed in two goals: helping students (a) to feel a sense of belonging to the institution (80% of programs with six or more faculty indicating this goal as “very important” vs. 51.4% of programs with two to five faculty members) and (b) to experience a smoother academic transition to college (85.7% vs. 58.3%). Perhaps our most interesting finding, however, was that in some cases, programs with no faculty involvement were closely comparable to programs with two to five faculty members. This was true for the goals of helping students to demonstrate growth in developing their values, demonstrate openness to diverse views, experience a smoother academic transition, and develop greater enjoyment of challenging intellectual pursuits. It appears, therefore, that programmatic goals for undergraduate students do not always go hand in hand with the involvement of faculty members.

CONCLUSION

As the findings of this study indicate, living-learning programs are by no means created equal. In fact, while all participating programs in our study self-identified as meeting the criteria in the definition put forward by the 2007 NSLLP, in our sample of 613 living-learning
programs, differentiation appears to be the norm rather than the exception. The large amount of variety we found in program characteristics makes it especially difficult to answer the question of what constitutes a living-learning program. Is a living-learning program one that offers a variety of courses, involves five or more faculty members, and makes career workshops, mentoring opportunities, and participation in research projects available to students? Or is it a program with no course offerings, one faculty member, and no cocurricular activities? Perhaps most importantly, do such questions propose important criteria that should be the basis of differentiating among living-learning programs?

To answer this last question, the need arises to ponder the purposes that a definition of living-learning programs might serve. The 2007 NSLLP included living-learning programs whose only critical characteristic was that undergraduate participants lived together in a discrete portion of a residence hall (or the entire hall) and participated in academic and/or extracurricular programming designed especially for them. This broad definition is essential in surveying the landscape of living-learning programming. However, when the goal is to understand the ways in which the programs shape the undergraduate experience, it may become important to develop narrower definitions. For example, programs that are more likely to offer a rigorous academic experience by making courses and faculty available may shape the student experience in different ways than programs with more emphasis on social interactions, but little academic focus.

The selected program characteristics we examined in the second part of this study are sometimes arranged in a systematic way, as reflected, for example, in the relationship between faculty involvement and reporting structures or course offerings and a stronger emphasis on educational goals for undergraduates. And while such relationships are not always clearly present, the ones that do exist point to the possibility of developing meaningful narrower definitions by classifying programs beyond the broad definition used by the 2007 NSLLP. A key implication of the present study is thus to continue the work of differentiating among living-learning programs, as in the case of existing work on thematic and structural typologies (Inkelas, Brower, & Associates, 2004; Inkelas et al., in press), with the ultimate goal of creating various classification schemes and examining student outcomes associated with them.

Classification schemes, in turn, may guide practitioners in planning, implementing, and improving their living-learning practices. In all likelihood, not all living-learning programs aspire to emphasize curricular learning in their practices. Instead, their goals might focus on providing an environment where students enjoy increased social interaction around a particular theme in informal settings. The student outcomes associated with such programs might be vastly different from their counterparts emphasizing the curricular learning element of living-learning programs. It is possible, for example, that programs focusing on social interaction might enhance social transition to college, while academically oriented programs might aid in the process of academic transition. Our analyses in this article provide the starting point to our further understanding of living-learning program functioning.
by pointing to the variety existing in current practice and calling on researchers to develop a set of narrower definitions of various types of living-learning programs. The future efficacy of living-learning programs may hang in the balance.

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More Like a Home Than a Hotel:
The Impact of Living-Learning Programs on College High-Risk Drinking

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High-risk episodic, or "binge," drinking among college students – defined as five drinks in one sitting for men and four drinks in one sitting for women (Wechsler & Nelson, 2001) – continues to be the number one health risk to college students, contributing to problems as serious and diverse as assaults, property damage on campuses and in surrounding communities, school failure, and death. While much more is known about strategies that are not effective to address student high-risk drinking, careful program evaluation studies show that strategies that work use policy to set clear expectations for acceptable and nonacceptable student behavior and then consistently enforce “the line” when it is crossed. This study posits that living-learning programs create strong local communities of learning that compete effectively with the college binge drinking culture to reduce student drinking and the harms associated with their drinking. Data from the National Study of Living-Learning Programs were used to compare drinking behaviors and harms for almost 24,000 students – half of whom lived in 268 living-learning programs from 34 universities, half of whom were a matched-comparison sample from the same 34 universities who lived in traditional residence halls. Results showed living-learning students drank significantly less and suffered fewer consequences from their own and others' drinking.

Clear themes can be seen in what does and does not work. Strategies that do not work assume students will make the "right" decision when presented with the "right" information or treat students as if they do not live in a particular social context.

assume students will make the “right” decision when presented with the “right” information or treat students as if they do not live in a particular social context. Programs that do work set clear expectations for acceptable and nonacceptable behavior and then consistently enforce “the line” when it is crossed. Additionally, any program’s effectiveness is severely limited when it is offered in a vacuum, contradicts, or is isolated from other broader messages about drinking that are embedded in the campus or community.

Much more is known about what does not work to curb problems associated with students drinking than is known about what does work. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism has provided a summary of effective and noneffective strategies (NIAAA, 2007). First, many strategies simply have no effect: so-called “education” strategies (even sophisticated ones) that tell students about the dangers of alcohol, providing blood alcohol content (BAC) feedback to students, values-clarification strategies, “just say no” approaches, and, in general, almost any approach that is presented in a way that is disconnected from other drinking messages or programs on campus. Other strategies show promise with individual students – clarifying drinking norms and expectancies and enhancing students’ motivation to find alternatives to drinking – but only during the “teachable moments” that exist after being conveyed to detoxification or after other serious problems have occurred. Finally, the strategies found to be most effective focus on campus and community partnerships to establish and enforce policies: setting bar density plans, increasing the price of alcohol through excise taxes, establishing effective bartender training programs, setting a consistent alcohol use policy for on-campus events, enforcing minimum age drinking laws, enforcing other alcohol violation laws, and otherwise creating and enforcing policies that “ratchet up” the consequences when drinking impacts community and academic conduct.

Clear themes can be seen in what does and does not work. Strategies that do not work

manage the alcohol problems of its student population (Madison Police Department, 2004).

Results showed that even on this high-drinking campus, the “local” living-learning program culture was so strong that the levels of harm within the living-learning programs were comparable to what students experience who attended college campuses exhibiting the lowest drinking rates in the country.

Weitzman, Nelson, Lee, and Wechsler (2004) found support for these themes. They analyzed 10-year trends in harm reduction and college binge drinking rates for campuses across the country that were attempting to address their binge drinking problems. They found not only that policy and enforcement approaches were most effective, but those campuses and communities enacting the
most comprehensive programs were the ones that were most successful. In another study, Weitzman and Nelson (2004) describe the “prevention paradox”: While a small fraction of college students are heavy binge drinkers who are most likely to get into trouble for their drinking, the most effective policy and enforcement strategies for harm reduction are those directed at the much larger group of moderate drinkers. This occurs because moderate drinkers make up a much larger segment of a college community; curbing the consequences of their drinking adds up to more positive community change versus targeting those who drink at the extreme.

Weitzman and Chen (2005) use the concept of social capital to explain these effects – that peer accountability and peer norms impact students’ decisions to drink and their behaviors leading to harms as a consequence of their drinking. Similarly, Brower, Golde, and Allen (2003) found peer accountability and the establishment of “local norms” to have the strongest impact on reducing harms associated with student drinking. In their study, samples of students living in one of three living-learning programs at a high-drinking campus were compared to a matched sample of students living in traditional residence halls at this same university. Results showed that even on this high-drinking campus, the “local” living-learning program culture was so strong that the levels of harm within the living-learning programs were comparable to what students experience who attended college campuses exhibiting the lowest drinking rates in the country. No particular alcohol-awareness or prevention campaigns were present in these living-learning programs; instead, what worked was that students confronted each other about their drinking – more precisely about how their drinking was negatively affecting their community. In sum, students held each other accountable for their behaviors. What developed within the living-learning programs was a strong sense that their residence hall was their “home” rather than a “hotel” where students were metaphorically throwing their towels on the floor for others to pick up.

Checkoway (2007) found that “engaged learning” leads generally to civic development and positive mental health outcomes, including lower alcohol abuse. Bruffee makes a similar point about the importance of community and “local culture” on student drinking (Bruffee, 1999; Schroeder, Brower, Bruffee, & Zeller, 2002). Bruffee comes at this issue from the opposite direction: He says that the community students have created around drinking has replaced a community of learning at the center of the meaning of college life. To Bruffee, this community of drinking is so pervasive that students’ sense of identity and the meaning of college itself now revolve around drinking and its related behaviors. “Animal House” has become the prevailing view of what it means to be a college student.

If the community of drinking is now synonymous with college life, how best do we address this? It is this author’s view that a two-pronged approach is needed: using policy and enforcement at the macrolevel of a college and its surrounding community and creating strong communities of learning at the local level within the campus. Living-learning programs provide the vehicle to create these strong communities of learning.
As was mentioned, Brower et al. (2003) found that a local culture developed within the living-learning programs such that students treated their residence hall more like a home than a hotel. Findings from the National Study of Living-Learning Programs (Inkelas, Brower, & Associates, 2004) show that students in living-learning programs exhibit many outcomes related to a community of learning. Living-learning students have more academic and social discussions with their peers; they have more mentoring relationships with faculty; they perceive their residence hall to be more academically and socially supportive; they experience a smoother transition to college; they are more committed to civic engagement, critical thinking, and the application of knowledge; and they expect to participate more in study abroad, internships, research, and senior capstones. Even three years after living in a living-learning program as a first-year student, a one-year exposure to a living-learning program was strong enough for these students to continue to show stronger commitments to civic engagement and higher levels of academic self-confidence, and they were more likely to be a mentor or tutor for other students (Brower, 2007). Living-learning programs appear to generate a local community of learning and peer accountability strong enough to compete with the community of drinking that pervades many college campuses.

The study to be reported here is a replication of Brower, Golde, and Allen (2003). The original study was undertaken at one institution, using three living-learning programs and a matched comparison group. Its primary limitation is whether the effects of peer accountability and local culture are unique to the three institution-specific living-learning programs examined, or instead generalizable to all living-learning programs across all institutions. If these findings are generalizable, the ability of living-learning programs to address high-risk drinking – through the development of a moderating local culture that engenders strong peer accountability – would be a real breakthrough in efforts to solve the serious public health problems associated with college drinking.

METHODS
The NSLLP and Its Measures

The data for this study come from the 2004 administration of the National Study of Living-Learning Programs (Inkelas, Brower & Associates, 2004), a project funded by the Association of College and University Housing Officers-International. In the 2004 administration, Web-based survey data on a variety of student academic and social outcomes were obtained from January to March, 2004, from 23,910 students at 34 colleges and universities across 24 states and the District of Columbia, across all regions of the United States. The final sample included 11,669 students in 268 living-learning programs (living-learning students) and 12,241 living in traditional residence halls at these same 34 institutions (non-living-learning students). This represented a 33% overall response rate from the random samples of living-learning and non-living-learning students selected by program administrators at each institution. To the best of these program administrators’ abilities, the living-learning and non-living-learning samples were matched by students’ gender, race/ethnicity, year in school, and residence hall occupancy.
Living-Learning Programs and College Drinking

The NSLLP used Astin’s (1993) Inputs-Environments-Outcomes model to identify student inputs (such as factors in students’ background characteristics and their high school activities) and college environments (such as factors in their residence hall and their college experiences) that might influence student outcomes. In this way, the NSLLP can determine elements about the living-learning programs’ effectiveness above and beyond contributions of student outcomes based on student inputs or the general college environment. The student outcomes studied included academic and social transition to college, perceptions of intellectual growth and abilities, perceptions of self-confidence, appreciation of multiculturalism and diversity, sense of civic engagement, and overall satisfaction with the residence hall and the college environment.

The NSLLP assessed outcomes by asking students about their social and academic behaviors and perceptions. For example, to assess intellectual growth, students were asked about the behaviors in which they engaged in and out of their classes, such as whether they took the “devil’s advocate” position in a controversial issue, or whether they questioned aspects of their reading materials and course lectures. In addition, students also were asked about their perceptions regarding their intellectual growth, such as how much they “enjoy[ed] the challenge of learning complicated new material.” Inkelas, Vogt, Longerbeam, Owen, and Johnson (2006) describe more fully the NSLLP outcome measures and the validity/reliability tests conducted.

Finally, and central to the analyses for the study of the relationships among alcohol use, their consequences, and students’ residence hall life, students were asked about their alcohol use, the effects of their own drinking on themselves (i.e., “primary effects”), and effects of others’ drinking on them (i.e., “secondary effects”). These questions were adapted from the College Alcohol Survey (Wechsler, Davenport, Dowdall, Moeykens, & Castillo, 1994).

Living-learning students have more academic and social discussions with their peers; they have more mentoring relationships with faculty; they perceive their residence hall to be more academically and socially supportive...

Before moving to the results of the study, it is important to note that with 268 living-learning programs represented in the 2004 NSLLP, the themes and organizational facets of the various programs varied widely. Programs ranged from “theme floors,” where a handful of students with similar interests live together, to comprehensive, degree-granting programs, such as the University of Michigan’s Residential College. From the perspective of this study’s research question, this diversity of features, quality, and comprehensiveness of programs strengthens the methodology since differences found between living-learning and non-living-learning students in their drinking and the...
effects of their drinking can generalize across the spectrum of living-learning programs.

Importantly, no unique or special alcohol education or training programs existed throughout the living-learning programs studied by the NSLLP. Likewise, no agreements existed across all the programs studied by the NSLLP concerning non-alcohol use or punishments. Again, if differences between living-learning and non-living-learning students are found, they will not be due to students’ exposure to special alcohol training or enforcement policies.

RESULTS

Sample Description

Table 1 presents descriptive characteristics of the living-learning and non-living-learning student samples. These two samples are similar, though statistically significant differences exist due to the large sample sizes. While almost two-thirds of all NSLLP students are women, a slightly higher proportion of men live in a living-learning program (35% vs. 33%).

Likewise, while more than 95% of all residents are heterosexual, more lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered students live in a living-learning program (5% vs. 3%). Living-learning programs also house slightly more students of color (24% vs. 23%).

A higher proportion of living-learning students’ parents have at least college degrees: 57% of mothers and 62% of fathers have a college degree or better for living-learning students versus 51% and 56%, respectively, for the non-living-learning mothers and fathers. Perhaps as a consequence, living-learning students also have somewhat higher GPAs and SAT scores as compared to the non-living-learning sample: 48% of living-learning students had an “A” average in high school versus 40% of non-living-learning students, and 56% of living-learning students (vs. 41% of non-living-learning students) had SAT composite scores above 1,260. Finally, living-learning students in the study come from families with slightly higher incomes.

Drinking Frequencies

Table 2 shows more living-learning students say they do not drink as compared to non-living-learning students (31% vs. 24%). Non-drinkers were removed from all analyses in which we asked about drinking patterns and about the effects of one’s own drinking on self or others (Tables 3, 4, and 6). All students were included in the analyses comparing the impact of others’ drinking (Table 5). Besides normalizing both samples in terms of students’ ability to answer all questions, removing the non-drinkers also removed this source of living-learning versus non-living-learning sample bias from the analyses.
### Table 1

Background Characteristics of Living-Learning and Non-Living-Learning Residents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Living-learning students</th>
<th>Non-living-learning students</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>df</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n = 9,056)</td>
<td>(n = 8,479)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>GENDER</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>35.3a</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>9.59**</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>64.6</td>
<td>66.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SEXUAL ORIENTATION</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisexual</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>19.6***</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay or Lesbian</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>95.4</td>
<td>96.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RACE/ETHNICITY</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>33.1***</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
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<td>0.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
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<td>White</td>
<td>75.6</td>
<td>76.4</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Multiracial</td>
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<td>3.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td><strong>FATHER’S EDUCATION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>80.6***</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS or less</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associates</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral/Professional</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>MOTHER’S EDUCATION</strong></td>
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<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>94.9***</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>HS or less</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associates</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral/Professional</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td></td>
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<td><strong>FAMILY INCOME</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Less than $25,000</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>20.4***</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25,000 – 50,000</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000 – 75,000</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>$75,000 – 100,000</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>$100,000 – 200,000</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>25.1</td>
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<td>More than $200,000</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td><strong>HIGH SCHOOL GPA</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>A+ or A</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>40.3</td>
<td>134.6***</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>A- or B+</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>B- or C+</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>C or C-</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>D+ or lower</td>
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<td>0.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>No GPA</td>
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<td>0.3</td>
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<td><strong>SAT COMPOSITE</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>400-1,140</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>317.1***</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>1,150-1,250</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>30.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>1,260-1,340</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1,350 or Higher</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* (a) Values represent percentage of students in each category.

* * p < .05. ** p < .01. *** p < .001.
For those who do drink, both the living-learning and non-living-learning students are similar in their base rates of binge drinking, and all are much higher than the national average: 62% for living-learning program students versus 70% for non-living-learning program students, as compared to the national average of 44% (Nelson, Naimi, Brewer, & Wechsler, 2005). Similar to national averages, the drinking patterns of both living-learning and non-living-learning students changed considerably once they entered college, with more than half stating that their drinking behaviors had changed (51% for living-learning students vs. 57% for non-living-learning students). When asked how their drinking changed, 40% or more of both groups either started drinking in college or began drinking significantly more (40% for living-learning students and 45% for non-living-learning students).

### Reasons Students Say They Drink

Table 3 presents the percentages of living-learning and non-living-learning students who selected various reasons to drink, rank ordered by their popularity. Only those students who are actively drinking in college are included in this analysis. Bold-face items also were significantly different for living-learning versus non-living-learning students in Brower et al. (2003).

By looking first at the rank order of items, we see that the two most popular reasons students drink are to celebrate a special occasion and because the alcohol was free or cheap. Drinking specifically to get drunk – i.e., drinking as recreation – was third most popular. At the bottom of the list was the pragmatic reason to drink to feel more comfortable having sex. Reasons typically given by alcoholics or those...
who are alcohol dependent, such as to elevate mood or to get away from problems (NIAAA, 2002), are near the bottom of the popularity list for students in this study. Finally, it would appear that all students choose to drink to ease social awkwardness and because of social pressure: More than one-third of students drink to feel more comfortable in social situations, and almost 30% drink when everyone else is (and even “drinking to fit in” is selected by about 12% of all students).

When looking at the different reasons that living-learning students and non-living-learning students drink, it would appear that the living-learning students are slightly more immune to drinking to elevate mood since significantly fewer said they drank if they had a bad day or got a bad grade, or to get away from their problems. Significantly fewer living-learning students also drank for celebratory or financial reasons, and fewer drank specifically to get drunk.

### Table 3
Factors that Influence Living-Learning and Non-Living-Learning Residents’ Decision to Drink, Rank Ordered by Popularity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Items</th>
<th>Living-learning students</th>
<th>Non-living-learning students</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>df</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I drink if it is a special occasion.</td>
<td>62.9***</td>
<td>66.3</td>
<td>29.7***</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I drink if it is free or cheap.</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>12.1***</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I drink to get drunk.</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>45.8</td>
<td>65.2***</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I drink as a reward for working hard.</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td>10.6***</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I drink to feel more comfortable in social situations.</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I drink if everyone else is drinking.</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I drink if I’m having a bad day or got a bad grade.</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>7.75**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I drink to get away from my problems and troubles.</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>4.27*</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I drink to fit in.</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I drink to lower my inhibitions about having sex.</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. (a) Items in boldface showed significant differences in Brower et al., 2003. (b) The sample sizes reflect only those students who reported drinking in college. (c) Values represent percentage of students answering yes.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. 
No differences were found between the living-learning and non-living-learning students’ attempts to use alcohol to ease social awkwardness or social pressure.

The top four reasons students chose to drink are all consistent with the findings of Brower, Golde, and Allen (2003). However, in that study, the rank order was different: drink

### Table 4

The Effects of One’s Own Drinking (“Primary Effects”) for Living-Learning and Non-Living-Learning Residents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Items*</th>
<th>Living-learning students (n = 6,268b)</th>
<th>Non-living-learning students (n = 6,478)</th>
<th>χ²</th>
<th>df</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I've missed or performed poorly in class.</td>
<td>24.1c</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>58.9***</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I've had a hangover.</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>81.7***</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I've passed out or lost consciousness.</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>58.8***</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I've had memory loss or have blacked out.</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>36.4***</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I've damaged property.</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I've been ashamed of my own behavior.</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>12.5***</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I've been confronted by a residence hall staff member.</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>7.1**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I've become sick or vomited.</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>35.1***</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I've physically harmed myself or another person.</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>5.7*</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I've caused a disturbance.</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>11.3**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I've had unprotected sex.</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>10.1**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I've received a citation or been arrested.</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>5.0*</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I've regretted getting sexually involved with someone.</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>10.9**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I've had a conflict with my roommate or another person.</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>14.2***</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I've fallen behind in my studies.</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>12.0**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I've regretted losing control of my senses.</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>8.4**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. (a) Items in bold face showed significant differences in Brower et al., 2003. (b) The sample sizes reflect only those students who reported drinking in college. (c) Values represent percentage of students answering yes.

* p < .05.    ** p < .01.    *** p < .001.
for a special occasion, drink to get drunk, drink as a reward for hard work, and drink if it’s free or cheap.

**Effects of Students’ Own Drinking**

Table 4 presents the problems to themselves and others caused by students’ own drinking, the so-called “primary effects” (Wechsler et al., 1994) of their drinking. Again, only those who are actively drinking in college are included in this analysis.

Across the board, living-learning students cited they suffer fewer problems because of their own drinking:

- They suffered from fewer academic problems, such as missing classes or doing poorly in class.
- They suffered from fewer social problems, such as getting into arguments or fights with others, getting into disturbances of any kind, physically harming themselves or others, having sex they regret, having confrontations with housing staff, and getting arrested.
- They suffered from fewer personal health problems, such as passing out or losing consciousness, getting sick or vomiting, having unprotected sex, and having hangovers.
- Finally, living-learning students were less likely to be ashamed of their behavior and less likely to regret losing control.

By looking at the bold-faced items, we see again that living-learning students in this national sample suffered fewer consequences, and the same fewer consequences, from their own drinking as in the Brower et al. (2003) single-institution study.

**Effects of Others’ Drinking on Students**

Table 5 provides results asking students about the effects on them caused by the drinking of others, or drinking’s so-called “secondary effects” (Wechsler et al., 1994). As in Brower et al. (2003), living-learning students had to deal with fewer, and less dramatic, effects from the drinking of others. This is true across the board, ...

...all students drank for reasons that were different from those that define alcoholism and alcohol dependence: The most commonly ascribed reasons these college students drunk were for celebratory reasons (for special occasions, as a reward for working hard), as its own recreation (drinking to get drunk), and when it was cheap. They did not often drink to elevate their mood or to avoid problems in their lives.

from serious fights and assaults to minor disturbances. The living-learning students were less likely to get into serious arguments and fights, less likely to get harassed and be humiliated, less likely to have unwanted sexual advances and be the victim of sexual assault,
less likely to have their sleep and studying disrupted, less likely to have “baby-sit” others, less likely to have their property damaged, and less likely to have their halls and bathrooms trashed with vomit (a situation all too prevalent in traditional residence halls).

Table 6 compares the secondary effects listed by students across the country from institutions with the lowest-third and highest-third binge drinking rates (Wechsler et al., 1998). For the sake of comparison, the percentages for these same items are also listed for the living-learning and non-living-learning students in this study (repeated from Table 4).

By comparing columns 2 and 3 on Table 6, we can see that living-learning students suffered from similar incident rates as those students attending colleges with the lowest binge rates – and remember that all students from the NSLLP exhibited much higher-than-national-average binge rates.
DISCUSSION

Results from this study, consistent with Brower et al. (2003), find that living-learning students drink less and suffer fewer consequences from their own drinking and from others’ drinking. *With no particular alcohol-prevention programming presented across the nation in living-learning programs, and despite the wide range of quality and types of living-learning programs sampled,* “something” happens in living-learning programs that positively impacts college drinking and its impacts on students.

Brower et al. (2003) speculated that this “something” can be attributed to the peer accountability and local community of learning that develops within living-learning programs; living-learning students treat their residence hall more like their home than like a hotel. We hear this comment routinely—students tell us (Brower & Laines, 1996) that one of the most important features of a living-learning program is their overall comfort and enhanced sense of “ownership.”

The principal limitation of Brower et al. (2003) was its single-institution design; the present research overcomes that limitation. At the same time, the study presented here is not without its own limitations—chief among them is that we do not know whether students differed in their pre-college drinking behaviors. Their self-reported differences are small,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Item</th>
<th>Students from high-binge schools</th>
<th>Students from low-binge schools</th>
<th>Living-learning students (n = 8,950)</th>
<th>Non-living-learning students (n = 8,379)</th>
<th>$\chi^2$ (Between living-learning &amp; non-living-learning students)</th>
<th>df</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harassed, insulted, or humiliated</td>
<td>36 b</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>157.***</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unwanted sexual advance</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>157.***</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious argument or quarrel</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>36.3***</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pushed, hit, or assaulted</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>6.6**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had property damaged</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>12.4***</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had study/sleeping interrupted</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>60.8</td>
<td>64.0</td>
<td>19.5***</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Been a victim of sexual assault or date rape</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>7.3**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. (a) High- and low-binge schools were defined as having drinking rates in the top one-third vs. bottom third nationally (Wechsler et al., 1998). (b) All values represent percentage of students answering yes.

* p < .05. ** p < .01. *** p < .001.
but statistically significant. We cannot conclusively rule out the fact that the main findings of this study are due to self-selection biases in the living-learning sample. At the same time, we do know that both living-learning and non-living-learning students drank much more heavily than the national average (e.g., both samples’ binge rates are more than 62% vs. the national average of 44%). Thus, both living-learning and non-living-learning students’ college drinking habits would appear to overwhelm the slight differences in their pre-college drinking. Additionally, the NSLLP’s 33% overall response rate, while consistent with other Web-based surveys of college students (Mitra et al., 2004), compromises the generalizability of these results. The institutions participating in the NSLLP did represent all regions throughout the United States and were drawn from several institutional types. Since the NSLLP is the only national study to date of living-learning programs, we are making best use of the best data available.

Why Students Drink

Besides this study’s main finding, that living-learning students drink less and suffer from fewer problems, two additional findings are worth noting that relate to the reasons why all students drink. First, all students drank for reasons that were different from those that define alcoholism and alcohol dependence: The most commonly ascribed reasons these college students drank were for celebratory reasons (for special occasions, as a reward for working hard), as its own recreation (drinking to get drunk), and when it was cheap. They did not often drink to elevate their mood or to avoid problems in their lives. This is consistent with descriptions of college drinking as a distinct phenomenon from alcoholism or traditional alcohol abuse (Brower, 2002). In fact, longitudinal studies do not show evidence that college drinking patterns lead to long-term alcoholism for the majority of college students who drink in college (Schulenberg, Bachman, O’Malley, & Johnston, 1994). Noting differences between college drinking and traditional alcoholism/alcohol dependence is not meant to discount the serious health, academic, social, and financial problems for binge drinking students during college. These problems are serious enough, in fact, to be worthy of attention in their own right without “piling on” other consequences related to alcoholism. This distinction is important, too, because what works to treat alcoholism does not work with college binge drinking, and vice versa.

A second finding worth attention concerns the reasons why students drink: While students most often drank for celebratory and financial reasons, it would appear that all students are susceptible to peer pressure. The two most popular reasons students drank immediately...
ately following drinking for celebratory and financial reasons were “to feel more comfortable in social situations” (almost 35%) and “because everyone else is” (29%). Further down the list, but still ascribed by almost 12% of students, was drinking “to fit in.” Interestingly, no significant differences were found between living-learning and non-living-learning students on all three of these reasons. Clearly, college students continue to feel the pull of social conformity and use alcohol as a social lubricant (DeJong et al., 1997). It is, in fact, well documented that the alcohol industry exploits this pull, along with the other reasons found in this study for why students drink (Kuo, Wechsler, Greenberg, & Lee, 2003).

**Conclusion: Living-Learning Programs and the Impact of Communities of Learning**

As cited at the beginning of this article, careful analyses demonstrate that what actually works to curb college drinking and its consequences are programs that create policies that set clear expectations for acceptable drinking limits and behaviors, coupled with the force of law to enforce these expectations. Effective programs are comprehensive across a campus and its surrounding community (NIAAA, 2002). In addition, Weitzman and her colleagues (Weitzman, Nelson, Lee, & Wechsler, 2004) find an additive effect – that the more campuses and communities use these comprehensive policy/enforcement programs’ strategies, the better their results will be.

Given the strong impacts of living in a living-learning program on students’ drinking, and particularly to lessen the negative consequences of drinking throughout the living-learning community, it is difficult not to appreciate that the environment created by a living-learning program – regardless of its particular type, size, or quality – is a powerful tool to lessen the problems associated with high-risk college drinking. Drawing on what has been found to be effective to address college binge drinking, it would appear that living-learning programs create strong and comprehensive “local” communities of learning that set positive expectations, and they provide strong incentives for students to adhere to these local-community expectations. Living-learning communities provide a powerful alternative to the “community of drinking” that serves as one component of the least-common-denominator bond among college students (Brufee, 1999). Put simply, living-learning programs provide the peer- and program-driven communities of learning that truly make a difference in student drinking and its consequences.

**REFERENCES**


Assessing Learning Outcomes in Living-Learning Programs: One Journey

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COSTS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION are outpacing inflation and gains in financial aid, resulting in limited resources for enhancement and enrichment programs. More and more, resource decision-makers are demanding data to inform their programmatic investments. This article contributes to the literature recent programmatic and learning outcomes assessments by College Park Scholars at the University of Maryland. Discussed are best practices resulting from the programmatic assessments of the Scholars’ 12 living-learning programs, and the use of “big questions” in evaluating learning outcomes.

BACKGROUND

There is an age-old question, “What if you gave a party and nobody came?” In 1994, the University of Maryland faced an analogous concern when it opened its doors to a new living-learning venture – College Park Scholars (Scholars). The program was born out of institutional measures that demanded a new approach to the undergraduate experience. On the residential side, 6,272 students contracted into a system with the capacity of 7,700 beds in the fall of 1992. Besides several residence halls being closed, one was leased to a sister university. On the academic side, SAT and GPA measures of incoming students had stagnated, as had retention and graduation rates.

Scholars emerged as a true partnership between student affairs and academic affairs (predating the Student Learning Imperative, American College Personnel Association, 1996). Then directors of Undergraduate Admissions and Resident Life, together with the dean for Undergraduate Studies, studied the literature of higher education that encouraged establishing learning communities for undergraduates. Their vision, supported by resources from both academic and student affairs, was shared with the university’s academic deans.

Four two-year, interdisciplinary communities were formed: Arts, sponsored by the College of Arts and Humanities; International Studies, by the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences; Scholars apply what is examined in the classroom and residence halls into their field experiences in the metropolitan D.C. area – even global points of interest – such as community service, research, exposure to the arts, civic engagement, and internships.
Life Sciences; and Science, Technology, and Society, by the A. James Clark School of Engineering. As deans identified faculty to design and deliver the curriculum and cocurriculum, administrators focused on culling admissions applications for candidates reflecting interdisciplinary interests and evidence of benefiting from active learning with, and among, others. Resident facilities renovated the first floor of a vacant high-rise to accommodate classrooms, faculty, and administration office space. Floors 2 through 8 were painted; bathrooms and lounges were updated. Move-in day arrived – as did all 500 students who had been invited to comprise the inaugural class of College Park Scholars.

Today, Scholars comprises a class of 12 comprehensive, interdisciplinary living-learning programs for select freshmen and sophomores, each directed by faculty appointed by their programs’ sponsoring deans. Students are invited to participate based on their high school academic performance, active engagement in their communities, and an appreciation for the contribution of diversity to their learning. Each year, 900 students (approximately 20% of Maryland’s freshman class) matriculate into the program and move into the Cambridge Community, comprised of five residence halls and one central teaching facility. Scholars apply what is examined in the classroom and residence halls into their field experiences in the metropolitan D.C. area – even global points of interest – such as community service, research, exposure to the arts, civic engagement, and internships. Upon successful completion of the program, students earn an academic citation and are well positioned for competitive, upper-level internships and research opportunities while completing their undergraduate degrees.

PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

Given that costs for higher education are outpacing inflation and gains in financial aid (Sandler, 2007), resources for innovative teaching and learning programs are scarce. More and more, resource decision-makers are demanding data to inform their programmatic investments. At the conclusion of Scholars’ growth into 12 programs, there was “feel-good” and anecdotal support for what had been accomplished. However, Scholars had yet to document empirically or systematically its accomplishments.

Thomas Angelo, summarizing the thoughts of many assessment scholars, identified several themes. From those themes, a revised definition of assessment emerged:

... an ongoing process aimed at understanding and improving learning. It involves making our expectations explicit and public; setting appropriate criteria and high standards for learning quality; systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well performance matches those expectations and standards; and using the resulting information to document, explain, and improve performance.

(1995, p. 7)

Drawing from Angelo’s (1995) principles, the Scholars Faculty Advisory Council (SFAC) designed and implemented an assessment of each of the 12 programs over a three-year period. Adopting an assessment model similar
More and more, resource decision-makers are demanding data to inform their programmatic investments. At the conclusion of Scholars’ growth into 12 programs, there was “feel-good” and anecdotal support for what had been accomplished. However, Scholars had yet to document empirically or systematically its accomplishments.

to those implemented by professional accreditation associations (e.g., the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, 2007), descriptive analyses (Lalli, Browder, Mace, & Brown, 1993) or self-studies were compiled by each program director, using criteria established by the SFAC. An outside panel of two-to-four faculty (comprised of SFAC faculty not associated with the program under review, or its sponsoring college) examined the self-study and conducted supplemental research, such as focus groups of alumni, instructors, and resident life staff. Special attention was devoted to surveying and interviewing current students. Reports were generated, then reviewed by program directors. Final reports were synthesized and presented to the Faculty Advisory Council at a meeting to which all program directors were invited. Findings and recommendations were discussed.

To complete the assessment loop, the Scholars Executive Director and the dean for Undergraduate Studies met with program directors and sponsoring deans to discuss individual program findings and the program-wide best practices that emerged from these assessments. Figure 1 provides the best practices identified, clustered into two categories (College Park Scholars, 2006).

Figure 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Content and Culture</th>
<th>Organization and Systems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intentional community building</td>
<td>Strong Web presence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitatively unique and strong academic rigor</td>
<td>Advisory councils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Active learning</td>
<td>Full-time staff presence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reflective learning</td>
<td>Leadership stability and effective transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>Support and clarity of responsibilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The first category of best practices – Program Content and Culture – addresses Angelo’s (1995) theme of assessing not only the classroom, but processes that influence learning:

- **Intentional community building.** First and foremost, College Park Scholars intentionally builds community, beginning with the kick-off event devoted to community service and continuing to the final Friday of the spring semester when sophomores showcase their practica. Community fosters cooperation, communication, and trust; in turn, students cultivate respectful and effective discourse and shared learning (Tinto, 1999).

Community is reinforced in the residence halls through clustering room assignments by program. Given that community is at the core of the Scholars experience, intentionality exists about its greater community responsibilities with neighboring towns and counties, through efforts such as tutoring and after-school programs.

The assessment process unveiled the emergence of a learning community for Scholars faculty and staff. Scholars provides a professional home for faculty and administrators, spanning student and academic affairs, who value student learning and alternative pedagogies. Collegiality with faculty from other departments, though an unintended consequence, is an outcome similar to that found at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (Golde & Pribbenow, 2000). Scholars is a place where teaching and learning is discussed, and it has grown into a valued community of campus colleagues and friends.

- **Qualitatively unique and strong academic rigor.** Given that the Scholars experience complements students’ general education and academic majors, and given that students who matriculate into the program are capable of rising to the academic challenge that the University of Maryland has to offer, learning opportunities must be unique and demanding. The Scholars academic experience is distinguished by active and reflective learning.

- **Active learning.** Learning in Scholars is different from the traditional knowledge acquisition that occurs in the freshman and sophomore years. From the onset, Scholars engage in field experiences, simulations, role-plays, peer teaching, and discussion. While addressing the interdisciplinary theme of the program, these experiences provide the opportunity for students to apply what they are learning in their general education and major courses.

- **Reflective learning.** Experience alone is not learning. Kolb’s Experiential Learning model (1984) underscores the necessity for students to reflect on their experiences for learning to occur. Begin-
ning with Service Day, a day devoted to community service, students are asked to think critically about their Scholars experiences through reflection. Reflection becomes a standard adjunct to all Scholars active-learning experiences. Over time, students develop a more critical view and analytical eye as they hone their reflection skills.

Reflection becomes a standard adjunct to all Scholars’ active-learning experiences. Over time, students develop a more critical view and analytical eye as they hone their reflection skills.

- **Diversity.** Given the interactive and interdisciplinary character of College Park Scholars, shared learning thrives from a diversity of student backgrounds, academic interests, and life experiences. Faculty embrace diversity, one of the four developmental instruction variables (Knefelkamp, 1974), in their teaching. Given that Scholars is a four-semester program, faculty often intentionally revisit topics, deepening the complexity of readings, points of view, and assignments. Through community service and service-learning, students venture into neighborhoods and schools unlike many of their own. The University of Maryland’s “Policy on Diversity in Educational Programs” (2005) affirms Scholars diversity initiatives and efforts in its recruitment process, curriculum, and field experiences.

The second category of best practices – Organization and Systems – addresses Angelo’s (1995) theme of assessment being a process embedded within larger systems:

- **Strong Web presence.** Having an informative, accurate, and visually attractive Web site is essential for College Park Scholars programs. Prospective students and their parents use the Web to make decisions about whether to accept an invitation to Scholars. Matriculated Scholars use the site to inform them of course selections and cocurricular opportunities, such as internships. Effective Web sites also celebrate students’ accomplishments and highlight shared learning events.

- **Advisory councils.** One program has established its own faculty advisory council and is worthy of emulation. It spreads the awareness of the Scholars program among the faculty in the sponsoring college, generating faculty invitations to students to participate in their research programs. Council members also assist in identifying candidates to invite to the program, assessment initiatives, staffing cocurricular events, and, occasionally, teaching. Student councils are also a growing phenomenon among programs. Student councils provide program directors a means to solicit input on programmatic changes and ideas for new cocurricular programs and to foster leadership development that becomes evident within the colloquia and program events.

- **Full-time staff presence.** A select number of colleges provide sufficient resources to support full-time presence in the residence hall offices of program associate/assistant...
directors. Though staff members’ time is split with other responsibilities for their respective colleges, their physical office space is within the Scholars community, making them readily available to advise and mentor students.

- **Leadership stability and effective transition.** Program directors often comment on the three-year learning curve to ground themselves in the director role. Given that the Scholars faculty experience is quite different from that in their departments, new faculty move cautiously: The first year is spent observing and analyzing; the second year, experimenting. By the third year, program directors feel grounded and confident in their role. Individual program effectiveness is compromised by frequent changes in leadership. As Scholars enters its second decade, it is maturing as an organization. Communication between directors, the executive director, and sponsoring deans is essential, particularly during leadership change.

- **Support and clarity of responsibilities.** Given the shared responsibility for the success of Scholars, clear and effective communication between resident life, program faculty, central staff, and the sponsoring colleges helps clarify roles. It also builds trust among those who share responsibilities for students’ learning and development.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT**

Though the Scholars’ program assessments proved valuable, they did not directly address Angelo’s (1995) primary theme of assessment – improving student learning. A university-wide learning-outcomes initiative, prompted by a forthcoming accreditation review, opened the door for Scholars to take that next assessment step. Scholars faculty directors were eager to participate in this campus initiative for two reasons: This was an opportunity to demonstrate how Scholars goes beyond delivering the “provostial four” (retention rates, graduation rates, student satisfaction, and grade point averages [Henscheid, 2007]); and it would provide an opportunity to design and implement a cycle of assessment and renewal of its scholastic endeavors.

At first, naively, identifying Scholarswide student learning outcomes appeared to be a straightforward process, at least for this executive director: (1) review state-of-the-art materials on learning assessment (Maki, 2004); (2) compile all related documents, such as the university’s stated learning outcomes and Scholars’ mission and goals statements; add to that the recent “best practices” document; (3) identify campus experts on assessment and learning outcomes and invite them to the table; (4) provide a robust supply of newsprint and markers; and (5) convene.

On one spring day in May 2005, all 12 Scholars program directors and representatives from across campus gathered with the goal of creating our common learning outcomes. At the end of the day, teams had identified an array of concepts and behaviors, such as diversity, information literacy, and mastering the technology of public presentations. As a result, rather than identifying clear and measurable learning objectives, the day had generated confusion and frustration for all those involved.

The summer arrived, bringing with it an opportunity for some reading, reflection, and creative thinking. Coincidentally, a team of
two faculty directors, two Scholars central staff members, and six students set out for the 16th annual Wakonse Conference on College Teaching. Though the conference featured distinct faculty and student tracks, participants had opportunities to address campus-specific issues. Conference planners suggested a common reading in preparation for the retreat, Ken Bain’s *What the Best College Teachers Do* (2004). A glimmer of hope appeared on page 50 of Bain’s discourse – the “big question.”

One morning, as fog rolled in off Lake Michigan, the Maryland team convened in camp Miniwanca’s Arts Center, threw some logs on the fire, and sat on chilly metal folding chairs around a stand of blank newsprint. Faculty and students were prompted to speak about their Scholars experience. Students spoke of community and the out-of-class learning opportunities. The two participating faculty were full professors, each having earned the campus distinction of “Distinguished Scholar Teachers.” Not surprisingly, even though Scholars programs address interdisciplinary themes, faculty’s passion for their specific fields emerged. This is consistent with Kuh and Whitt’s (1988) finding that one’s discipline is integrally woven into a faculty member’s identity. It also spoke to the dispassionate response to the Scholars-wide learning outcomes generated that May.

Introduced to the conversation was Bain’s concept of the big question; more specifically, might there be an overriding question for faculty to introduce to each new cohort of Scholars in their programs that points to what they hope students will understand and know upon completion of the program? Equally essential to the big question was creating an opportunity for students to reflect on their learning. What emerged was the concept of challenging students to consider their Scholars experience in holistic, meaningful ways, through the interdisciplinary lens as prescribed by their faculty.

As executive director, I focused the remainder of the summer on preparing for the first faculty directors’ meeting of the fall semester.

...
Key to this process moving forward was convincing faculty of its value. It lay in Ibarra and Lineback’s (2005) discussion of the personal narrative that emerged from a literature search on reflection. I developed the following scenario to share at the meeting:

Imagine one of your students in a future job or graduate-school interview, where he or she is asked about the Scholars citation that appears on his or her transcript. Would you want your student to respond by saying, “It was a great two years where I made some of my best friends because we took similar courses and lived together in the residence halls,” or would you want that student to describe, clearly and distinctly, what he or she learned from the program’s colloquia, supporting courses, and field experiences, and how that learning informed future educational and career choices?

Should this scenario spark the faculty’s interest, their answers would become the basis for their programs’ “big questions.”

Second, given my student affairs training, I addressed developmental outcomes related to learning, such as becoming a beneficial contributor to one’s community, valuing diverse perspectives, and becoming a lifelong learner.

Third, as a basis for getting the ball rolling, I worked with a faculty member to draft a sample big question:

During your two years as an environmental studies student, you have experienced and examined natural and built environments in a variety of ways. What have you learned about these environments and your relationship to them? Will this affect your future learning, career, or future life decisions? How so?

Each summer, Scholars hosts three orientations in which faculty meet not only with new students, but also with participating parents. These orientations presented opportunities for faculty to introduce incoming students to their programs’ big questions. They also presented an opportunity for directors to gather and discuss next steps with respect to learning outcomes.

The fall semester arrived, and the faculty directors convened. In collaboration with the leadership of the two faculty participants in the summer conference, the “Scholars Narrative” was born. Meeting with faculty directors individually to clarify any of their questions or concerns, they drafted their programs’ big questions. Some sought input from students and colleague directors. Eventually, learning outcomes – through the use of the “big question” – were developed for all 12 programs.
While the big questions (i.e., learning outcomes) were being generated, attention also focused on how the program was going to assess these questions among our students. As executive director, I drafted prompts for faculty to consider and a sample method to assess students’ learning. This method involved a short reflection paper (two pages maximum) asking students to reference how specific activities they participated in, while a College Park Scholars community member, enhanced their growth or development along the lines of their programs’ big question (see Figure 2).

Yet, given the multidisciplinary nature of the Scholars programs, finding consensus on how to evaluate these reflection papers across science and humanities disciplines proved a challenge. Consequently, work needed to be done on developing a common evaluation tool, such as a “rubric,” that all programs could use or adapt – regardless of their disciplinary focus. Working from some examples of rubrics from Maki (2004), I drafted one for the College Park Scholars Program (Figure 3). The rubric represents the convergence of each program’s big question, the best practices identified through the earlier program assessments, and students’ own reflective work. Program staff could use the rubric to evaluate students’ reflections in response to the program’s big question on four criteria that reflected College Park Scholars’ best practices: the application of learning to new contexts, the appreciation of diverse perspectives, the active citizenry of community, and the foundation of lifelong learning.

By the end of the fall semester, a College Park Scholars “Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan,” complete with a list of big questions, the rubric, and a timeline for implementation, was submitted to the university. However, maintaining momentum for implementation was crucial. Each summer, Scholars hosts three orientations in which faculty meet not only with new students, but also with participating parents. These orientations presented opportunities for faculty to introduce incoming students to their programs’ big questions. They also presented an opportunity for directors to gather and discuss next steps with respect to learning outcomes.

Given that individual programs have the flexibility to evaluate their big questions in ways that best suit their programs, the summer of 2006 generated conversations among faculty directors about the use of short papers, portfolios, résumés, and capstone/practica posters as potential vehicles for the assessment of their big questions. Key to the exercise was to integrate the assessment vehicle into the natural rhythm of each program.

One year later, some programs had conducted their first learning outcomes assessments and provided information about their findings in annual reports received in the summer of 2007. The Advocates for Children program piloted a portfolio project. Using a rubric that addressed academic excellence, active contribution to the learning community, advocating for children, a personal road map, and composition, portfolios were rated on a scale of 0 to 3 in each of the areas. An overall average was computed. Based on a pilot of 20 portfolios, most students scored in the 2 to 3 range. Though this program’s process is labor- and time-intensive, it provides a unique opportunity for students to make meaning of their Scholars experience, and for faculty to validate their curricular and pedagogical efforts.
First and foremost, faculty directors should provide prompts that guide students’ thinking around the content of their programs. Second, faculty directors are encouraged to prompt students to reflect on their Scholars experience through lenses that represent what College Park Scholars values. In 2005, the faculty and staff of College Park Scholars focused its collective attention on identifying criteria to evaluate candidates for the program. Twenty criteria were identified, clustered in the following three categories. Each candidate referred from the Office of Undergraduate Admissions receives full-file review.

- **Academic success** (AS)
- **Contribution to one’s community** (CC). Foster mutual respect, caring and acting on commitments
- **Valuing diverse perspectives** (DP). Shared- and active-learning benefit from interaction among students who bring to the learning process a diversity of perspectives and experiences; therefore, we seek students who reflect a broad array of backgrounds or experiences, and who value diverse perspectives.

Additionally, the Scholars Mission and Goals statements underscore two more variables that may be considered when asking students to respond to Scholars programs’ big questions:

- Scholars value of *lifelong learning* (LLL); and
- Scholars unique niche of *active learning* (AL)

To follow is a sample introduction and set of prompts to consider when presenting a program’s big questions to students:

The following exercise is an opportunity for you to synthesize your College Park Scholars experience. Though some prompts have been provided, access them only as guides to your thinking.

In no more than two pages, double-spaced and typewritten, respond to the prompts below; use at least two field experiences, learning activities, comments from guest speakers, or readings from your colloquia or supporting courses to support your thesis. Write about (fill in the program’s big question). How has your Scholars experience informed you about (the program’s big question)? Support your thesis by discussing learning and experiences from:

- Your Scholars colloquia (AS)
- Your Scholars supporting classes (AS)
- Your Scholars cocurriculum (AL)
- Your Scholars practicum/capstone experience (AL)
- A group or team project - in our outside the classroom, or solo class presentation (CC)
- A fellow Scholar or faculty member with a perspective, or set of experiences, different from your own (DP)
- How will your Scholars experience inform your junior and senior years? Your life after Maryland? (LLL)
The Media, Self and Society Program asked students to write a summative essay at the conclusion of their sophomore year. These essays were then evaluated using the rubric. The excerpt below represents a narrative from one student’s essay that particularly exemplifies growth in the area of critical thinking:

Academically, Scholars has provided me an oasis from [my major] engineering. That is, it gave me an opportunity to have an academic focus outside of my major. This academic experience has been made up of practical and critical examinations of the media. Coming in as a freshman, my critical thinking skills were horrible. I, as an engineer, think practically, and I think in terms of what works/doesn’t work. I quickly found myself awestruck at how the majority of the journalism/communications students in my colloquium class could immediately formulate opinions, and back them up with excellent points during critical discussions without even thinking twice about it. I often found that it took me the entire length of the discussion for me to even come up with the slightest bit of opinion. As my freshman and sophomore years went on however, although I didn’t really volunteer my opinions, I found that I could follow what other students were saying better. I could either agree or disagree in my head, and come up with a reason why most of the time. In this sense, I definitely improved my critical thinking skills through the Scholars program.

CONCLUSION

Not surprisingly, program directors are still advancing with their learning outcomes assessments cautiously; after all, this is uncharted territory. But current and future students deserve a quality program, and resource decision-makers demand data to support institutional investment. Through program and learning outcomes assessments, together with participation in national studies such as the Boyer Partnership Assessment Project (Nesheim et al., 2007) and the National Study of Living-Learning Programs (www.livelearnstudy.net), College Park Scholars systematically gathers, analyzes, and interprets data to inform program enhancement and renewal.

As a program, our learning outcomes assessment continues to be a work-in-progress. Seasoned and new directors tinker with their learning outcomes assessments; big questions are being formulated and reformulated; data is being collected; and rubrics are being revised. Most importantly, out of these efforts, program practices are being redesigned to address areas for improvement. Unquestionably, though, through the coming together of an intellectually diverse and unique academic community, we have put together a learning outcomes imperative that honors the unique contributions of faculty, the developmental aspirations of the staff, and the learning of our students.

Resources on College Park Scholars learning outcomes are available at: http://www.scholars.umd.edu/execdir/assessment.cfm
### Sample Rubric for Personal Scholars Narrative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Insufficient (1)</th>
<th>Surface (2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Composition</strong></td>
<td>Obviously a first draft, not spell-checked or proofread, little-to-no structure of sentences and paragraphs; little-to-no evidence of acquisition of language used in Scholars experience.</td>
<td>Some grammar or punctuation errors, some structure, but editing needed; use of words from Scholars experience, but evidently not internalized. Some inappropriate uses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scholars Criteria:</strong></td>
<td>Few to no examples of experiences, readings, or guest speakers provided to support argument. If provided, only listed, not explained; list provided of supporting courses and related experiences, but no context set or connections made. No evidence of cognitive reasoning.</td>
<td>Some examples provided but not well reasoned; some attempts to make connections between curriculum and Scholars experience, but obviously could do more to persuade the reader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Excellence: Use of supportive evidence and ability to make connections across courses and cocurricular learning opportunities.</td>
<td>No mention of diversity of learning, student’s cohort, or diversity of learning experiences.</td>
<td>Mention of diversity of learning experiences and fellow learners and their ideas, but no explanation of how they enriched the learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation of the contribution of diverse perspectives to one’s learning.</td>
<td>No evidence of having participated in group projects or cocurricular activities.</td>
<td>Some evidence of having participated, but no evidence of integrating that into his/her learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active contributor to his/her learning community.</td>
<td>Makes little-to-no attempt to use the Scholars experience as a benchmark for what happens next.</td>
<td>Has an inkling of how the Scholars experience might inform junior and senior years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal road map, i.e., a Life-long Learner.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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Overall comments and recommendations for next steps:
### Deep (3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score and Comments</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No grammar or punctuation errors; eloquently written and internalized; appropriate use of vocabulary specific to Scholars experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate and well-reasoned use of supportive evidence, such as Scholars experiences, readings, or comments from guest speakers; well-reasoned connections between Scholars experience and supporting (and other) courses. Persuasive narrative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanation provided of how ideas of others contributed to one’s learning; explanation provided on how diversity of learning opportunities, through adding context and application, deepened one’s learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cites examples of mutual respect, caring for others’ learning, and acting on commitments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articulates well the Scholars experience and how it has informed future academic, cocurricular, and life decisions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Total Score:

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Assessing Living-Learning Programs
REFERENCES


Living-Learning Programs in the Digital Age

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THE PROLIFERATION OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES is transforming the traditional collegiate experience, both inside and outside of the classroom. To casual observers, students appear to be engaging in “traditional” undergraduate activities: going to class, living in residence halls, eating in campus dining venues, and working out in campus recreation centers. However, closer observations reveal that today’s college experience is qualitatively different from that of a generation ago. Students’ curricular and cocurricular interactions with the campus are increasingly (and often invisibly) being shaped by the myriad of information technologies made available to them.

Technological advances are bringing alternative, and sometimes preferred, options for students to fulfill their educational and social goals. Today’s undergraduates are accessing course materials and class lectures from the Internet, retrieving resource and library materials electronically, and communicating and interacting with faculty and co-learners virtually. Similarly, students are maintaining social networks electronically, relying on cell phones, PDAs, wireless personal computer connections, and Web sites such as Facebook and MySpace. Even recreation has changed, with sophisticated gaming and entertainment Web sites allowing students to interact with “friends” from around the world as easily as they would with fellow members of a floor’s intramural soccer team. Many students’ academic, social, and recreational activities are increasingly converging upon one central point: the computer.

Information technology already has begun to influence the living and learning environment on our campuses in significant ways. This trend is creating new opportunities and challenges for those responsible for managing living-learning programs. The future success of our programs may be determined in no small part by how effectively we leverage the power of these technologies to bolster our efforts at residential education, helping students achieve
important curricular and cocurricular outcomes. In this commentary, I discuss the powerful potential of the pairing of living-learning programs and new uses of technology. Then, I discuss how technology already has changed the way in which today’s college students learn. I conclude with recommendations on the infusion of technology in curricular, cocurricular, and community development outcomes.

LIVING-LEARNING PROGRAMS AS PARTNERS WITH TECHNOLOGY

The past two decades have witnessed an undergraduate reform movement championing a renewed focus on enhancing student learning. In part, stakeholders have argued for the importance of integrating students’ curricular and cocurricular experiences to create experiential linkages to formal academic work (ACPA, 2004; Boyer, 1987; Kuh, Shedd, Whitt, & Associates, 1991; Schroeder, Mabel, & Associates, 1994; Terenzini & Pascarella, 1994). For hundreds of campuses, living-learning programs have become popular interventions to do just that (The Residential Learning Communities International Clearinghouse [RLCIC], n.d.). Conceptually, a key component of the living-learning experience is the belief that learning can be greatly enhanced when high-quality interpersonal interactions are manifested between students, their peers, and their faculty, both inside and outside the classroom. Ideally, these interactions are structured around learning-related tasks. For better or for worse, technology has the potential for changing the dynamic in which these interactions take place (Milne, 2007).

Andrew Milne (2007) has argued that colleges and universities are moving from the now familiar information age to the so-called interaction age. In the information age, the focus had been on student and faculty access to and delivery of digital content. Well along that path, Milne has noted we are shifting into the interaction age, in which information technology becomes the actual mechanism of interactions and, often, the subject of the interactions. Milne argues that this shift has consequences for educators because learning is a social process, driven by interactions between individuals, their environments, and information surrounding them.

Milne (2007) also argues that, as a fundamental principle, campuses should plan to deploy learning technologies that encourage and support two levels of interaction: human-to-information and human-to-human. Living-learning programs are particularly poised to support these two levels of interaction. As campuses become more and more wired, campus leaders are recognizing that effective teaching and learning can occur in all corners of campus, not just in classrooms. In fact, studies show that the most powerful settings for group creativity and new idea generation are in informal spaces where people gather (Yen, 2001). With proper utilization of information technologies, where human-to-human interactions are most effectively balanced with human-to-information technology interactions, living-learning programs can likely become even more powerful learning environments than they are today.
Although the rapid expansion of information technologies occurred contemporaneously with renewed interest in living-learning programs, comprehensive planning for their uses as tools to achieve living-learning program outcomes has often not occurred. More importantly, we have not structured our programs to keep student technology use from impairing either the quality of our communities or the attainment of program outcomes. By failing to incorporate technology use as a component of living-learning program assessment and improvement models, we run the risk of diminishing the powerful educational benefits accrued from quality interpersonal interactions between students and between students and faculty. We need to be more intentional in these efforts and must both define and manage the appropriate balance of face-to-face and electronic interactions within our communities.

CHANGING TECHNOLOGIES’ INFLUENCE ON STUDENT LEARNING

Given that today’s college student spends nearly one day out of every week using Internet-related technologies, it is perhaps not surprising that technology influences important elements of the learning process (Katz, 2007). Specifically, technology plays two important mediating roles. First, technology has begun to shift the way in which students, peers, and faculty interact around learning. Second, evidence exists that technology is mediating the learning process itself, causing students to value increased immediacy and engagement with their learning. I describe each phenomenon below.

Technology appears to enhance student-faculty interaction on campus. Robert Kvavik (2005) found that students reported technology not only eased the process of communicating with their instructors, but that the speed with which faculty were providing feedback had increased. Peer interactions have been similarly influenced, with students noting that technology had the potential to increase communication and collaboration with their classmates. Technology’s potential to influence these interactions carries with it an important lesson for living-learning designers. Indeed, two key elements of living-learning programs’ effective-
ness are their capacity to harness the power of students’ interactions with their peers and with faculty (Inkelas, Brower, & Associates, 2007).

Importantly, the research suggests that technology has not reshaped the process of student learning. Although technology’s use is increasing each year, research indicates students are slightly more often than they met with them in person, 90% of students who reported they e-mailed faculty “very often” also reported that they sought in-person meetings with faculty “sometimes” or “often” (Center for Studies in Higher Education, 2004). The California study also revealed that over half of the respondents reported meeting with classmates in person to prepare assignments at least sometimes, compared to only a third who reported collaborating with classmates online.

Technology also may be shaping students’ learning preferences and the ways in which learning occurs. First, much to the consternation of faculty acculturated to teaching via lecture, students often become impatient in situations where they do not feel engaged, preferring to learn through discovery rather than simply “being told.”

William J. Zeller

Technology also may be shaping students’ learning preferences and the ways in which learning occurs. First, much to the consternation of faculty acculturated to teaching via lecture, students often become impatient in situations where they do not feel engaged, preferring to learn through discovery rather than simply “being told.” Richard T. Sweeney, university librarian at the New Jersey Institute of Technology, has challenged faculty to “Change your teaching style. Make blogs, iPods, and video games part of your pedagogy. And learn to accept divided attention spans. A new generation of students has arrived – and sorry, but they might not want to hear you lecture for an hour” (Carlson, 2005, p. A34). Perhaps, more importantly, that process of discovery may no longer happen solely in the classroom. With the advent of readily accessible technology, Lomas and Oblinger argued that “students blend their physical and virtual worlds, moving seamlessly between living and learning environments. Students mix classes, study, group work, eating and sleeping” (2006, p. 5.8). Learning, therefore, is increasingly being embedded into many facets of students’ experiences – both inside and outside the classroom.

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One of technology’s greatest benefits may lie in its ability to allow students to personalize and take control of the learning environment. Sweeney states that “students today are more apt to take control of their learning and choose unconventional technological methods to learn better” (Carlson, 2005, p. A36).

Duderstadt, Wulf, and Zemsky (2005) noted

The Net generation of students has incorporated IT completely into its vision of education and has begun to use it to take control of the learning environment. From instant messaging to e-mail to blogs, students are in continual communication with one another, forming learning communities that are always interacting, even in classes (as any faculty member who has been “Googled” can attest!). Adept at multitasking and context switching, they approach learning in a highly non-linear manner, which is a poor fit with the sequential structure of the university curriculum. (p. 2)

Unlike the curriculum, the design and structure of living-learning programs appears to be much in alignment with the needs and learning styles of today’s students. These programs have been developed to blend the curricular and cocurricular components of student life to maximize learning. The less formal environment of the living-learning program creates a setting where students and faculty can interact within a common area of interest in both prescribed and serendipitous settings. Within these communities, learning is more experiential, heuristic, and active, with the intent of integrating the cognitive and affective elements of the student experience. All of this seems to be in support of students’ interests and learning styles, and a living-learning environment that balances technological and face-to-face interactions may be the ideal learning environment for today’s student.

Although students do so to varying degrees, it is clear they are using technology to enhance

The less formal environment of the living-learning program creates a setting where students and faculty can interact within a common area of interest in both prescribed and serendipitous settings. Within these communities, learning is more experiential, heuristic, and active, with the intent of integrating the cognitive and affective elements of the student experience.

Living-Learning Programs in the Digital Age

their curricular and cocurricular experiences while in college. Given the capacity of these technologies to change the way in which students, peers, and faculty interact, it is imperative that those responsible for designing and operating living-learning programs intentionally manage technology use to support student learning. Below are suggestions for how technology can be used in service of both living-learning programs’ curricular and cocurricular ends.
USING TECHNOLOGY TO ENHANCE CURRICULAR, COCURRICULAR, AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES

Curricular Considerations

As technology use becomes more ubiquitous for students and faculty alike, living-learning program staff must develop a full understanding of the use of residentially based technologies. An important first step is enhanced collaboration with academic faculty to ensure that the technological resources available within the living-learning programs support and complement the instructional technologies being utilized in the classroom. In many ways, the opportunities for partnerships between student affairs staff and academic affairs are greater than ever. In general, two models of courses are offered in the living-learning setting: those taught directly within the residence hall or living-learning facility and those taught outside the program that have all or some of the living-learning program’s students in attendance. With either model, the goal of having seamless in-class and out-of-class student experiences can be greatly enhanced through technology.

The following is a list of possible strategies for incorporating new technology systems to enhance the living-learning instructional environment:

- Design classrooms and other public spaces within the living-learning facility to support active and experiential learning. Install instructional technologies that allow students to collaborate and to interact with people and information inside and outside the classroom to debate, research, and solve problems (EDUCAUSE, 2004). Technologies within the living-learning classroom should parallel the instructional technology systems being utilized in classrooms on the rest of the campus. In fact, living-learning classrooms can often become campus locations for faculty to gain new skills and experiment with the use of new instructional technologies or new course materials. The more intimate class sizes and pedagogies of the courses taught within living-learning programs could allow faculty to gain instructional technology skills or test new multimedia content within a smaller and safer instructional environment.

- Design public spaces in the living-learning program with technological systems that support group work and interactive learning practices. “The interface needs of an individual browsing the Web while sitting alone in an office are substantially different from those of students in a group preparing a class presentation...”

- Physical infrastructures within the living-learning program should support this new technology. For example, flexible and movable furniture will allow for students in living-learning classes to redesign their
spaces when small groups and team work is optimal. Further, classrooms within the living-learning program should be flexible enough to allow for large lectures, breakout discussions, study space, or even group work space.

- Design public spaces in the living-learning program with technological systems that support group work and interactive learning practices. “The interface needs of an individual browsing the Web while sitting alone in an office are substantially different from those of students in a group preparing a class presentation. The latter scenario could involve simultaneous Web browsing, photo editing, creative writing and numerical analysis by different people, creating greater need for cross device sharing, parallel awareness and implicit archiving capabilities as the group works together at a table.” (Milne, 2007). Stanford University has designed such spaces within their residential settings (see http://academiccomputing.stanford.edu/groupspace/ for more information).

- Course assignments could include interviews or discussions with constituents away from campus – in the local community, in another state, or in another part of the world. Facilitate electronic discussions with students or subject experts from other campuses, or from other countries. These could be in the form of videoconferencing, a blog, Facebook, or a Web forum. Student groups within the living-learning program could be responsible for coordinating the assignment, making the learning experience more hands-on and effective.

- Work with faculty to balance electronic and face-to-face communications they have with students. With e-mail supplementing rather than replacing office hours or other in-person meetings with faculty, it is important that living-learning program staff create both online and in-person opportunities for student interactions with living-learning affiliated faculty. Anecdotal assessments from students indicate they are most comfortable using an electronic message to make an initial contact with a faculty member. If the faculty member’s response is positive and encouraging, they will be more likely to initiate a face-to-face followup. Living-learning program staff can work with both faculty and students to facilitate these interactions, to ensure that quality face-to-face interactions occur. Faculty office hours and visitations within the living-learning program space can serve as a means of conveniently connecting with students who have made previous electronic contacts.

- Podcasting lectures of living-learning program-supported subject areas from other classes and from other institutions can help students gain new perspectives on their own course material. Students are currently doing so themselves. A student recently made this comment on a technology survey at UC Irvine: “I’ve come to appreciate Webcast so much that I tend to watch the Berkeley or MIT Webcast of the same UCI classes just because it’s accessible at my leisure and I can review it as often as I like. Often it serves as a better teacher than my classroom merely because I can make learning at my own pace.” Broadcasting these lectures to small groups within the living-learning program would facilitate group work and augment the academic community.

- The living-learning program also can create an archive or multimedia library of mate-
materials and resources specifically designed to support the curricular and cocurricular activities of students in the program. For example, the aforementioned podcasts could be archived for future use. Links to full-text library resources could be bookmarked on the living-learning program’s Web site. Additionally, students could use multimedia e-portfolios as repositories for classroom assignments or for multimedia demonstration projects within courses (Clayton-Pedersen & O’Neill, 2006).

- As faculty become more comfortable with assigning multimedia projects – and students with completing them – interdisciplinary project work that could enhance the living-learning program theme will grow. For example, an interdisciplinary service learning project could serve as a common class project for living-learning students in different courses – be it social work, business, communications, or education, for example. Each student would bring a unique background and expertise to the project and would be supervised by faculty from their home department. The living-learning program staff could supervise the project, working closely with faculty from the affiliated courses.

Cocurricular and Community Development

As new technologies are being brought to bear upon the curricular elements of living-learning programs, they provide new opportunities for cocurricular programming and community development activities. Designing flexible spaces and technology systems that can be converted from daytime academic functions to evening cocurricular functions is essential for supporting all elements of living-learning communities. In addition, utilizing new technologies throughout the community can provide convenient activities to keep students engaged in community life and bring vibrancy to the community. These technological functions should be designed to promote and support peer and community interactions.

- Program Web sites, portals, and electronic newsletters can be utilized to keep community members informed about community issues, upcoming programs, and other scheduled campus events.

- Electronic voting within the community will facilitate the provision of input and decision-making within the community. Living-learning program staff can seek input on community policies, administrative decisions, or community programming preferences.

- Similarly, hall governments and other student organizations affiliated with the living-learning program can utilize technological resources to publicize meetings and programs, obtain input from community members, collaborate with other campus organizations, and develop multimedia programs and resources for the community.
A living-learning program Facebook can provide a foundation for community members to interact with one another and with faculty members and staff. Many students begin forming residential community Facebooks before arriving on campus. At Stanford, more than 80% of students in the class of 2011 were participating in Facebook groups months before coming to campus (R. Holeton, personal communication, October 2, 2007). Some campuses have begun to use Facebook to help students choose roommates. In addition, a living-learning Facebook site provides an opportunity for students in similar types of living-learning programs on other campuses or similar residential communities around the world to interact with one another.

Academic advising by staff or peers and small group tutorials with teaching assistants or peers can be facilitated electronically. In addition, campus cable television networks can be used to broadcast test review and tutorial sessions led by faculty into the residential setting.

Community electronic discussion lists (whether listserves or Web based), coordinated by the resident assistant or other community leader, can facilitate in-depth dialogue within the community. These can be announcement lists for staff or chatlists for general discussion. These initiatives, structured around “teachable moments” that have captured the attention of the community, can become powerful learning and community development opportunities (Holeton, 1997).

An Internet radio broadcast initiative within the living-learning program can provide skill development and community development opportunities for students who participate. This also helps build a unique identity for the community, and can help connect with others on and off campus in a unique way.

Finally, maintaining an electronic archive of the community is a significant way of maintaining an inter-generational history of the living-learning program. Photos, newsletters, videos, and other written materials stored electronically can keep the unique history of the living-learning program intact and can build connections between all students and faculty who have been affiliated with the program — past, present, and future. Tools for developing community archives might be a Content Management System (CMS) and/or an e-portfolio system tuned to community needs.
THE FUTURE

Although difficult to predict, the future use of technology will inevitably bring both great opportunities and significant challenges to higher education. Some futurists such as Peter Drucker forecast that large universities will not exist in the future (Lenzer & Johnson, 1997). But most agree that the survival of our campuses will rely on ensuring that face-to-face interaction remains the foundation of the on-campus teaching and learning environment. Duderstadt, Wulf, and Zemsky (2005) envision the core function of the university becoming the teaching of skills and competencies in creativity, innovation, and the application of new knowledge. They contend that the university may need to reorganize itself quite differently, stressing forms of pedagogy and extracurricular experiences to nurture and teach the art and skill of creativity and innovation. This would probably imply a shift away from highly specialized disciplines and degree programs to programs placing more emphasis on integrating knowledge. To this end, perhaps it is time to integrate the educational mission of the university with the research and service activities of the faculty by ripping instruction out of the classroom – or at least the lecture hall – and placing it instead in the discovery environment of the laboratory or studio or the experiential environment of professional practice. (p. 3)

In many ways, the campus of the future envisioned above would position living-learning programs as an even more integral campus learning environment than they are today. Should the need for the traditional classroom – designed to transfer knowledge from professor to student – disappear, then the importance of integrated experiential learning spaces will increase. What better place exists to integrate academic content with students’ life experiences than the college residence hall? Indeed, living-learning programs may in fact become the foundation of the campus teaching and learning environment of the future. Only time will tell, but the work being done today to bring new vitality to teaching and student learning will serve as the foundation for the campus learning experience of the future. Technological advances and the evolution of new forms of learning communities will inevitably influence the future design and function of our campuses.

REFERENCES


The Journal of College and University Student Housing

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Publication Schedule:
The Journal of College and University Student Housing publishes two issues per year. Beginning in 2008, the March/April issue will focus on a selected topic and typically feature a guest editor that is a specialist in that field. The October/November issue will include more general topics of research. Topics and editors to consider for the March/April issue should be submitted to the Journal editor.

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The Editorial Board of The Journal of College and University Student Housing considers research-based articles in the following categories of particular interest to housing professionals and those interested in college and university student housing programs:

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- Historical Updates
- Best Practices
- International Focus
- Theoretical
- Applied/Empirical Research
- Current Trends in Collegiate Housing
- Point of View (commentary on trends and/or research related to collegiate housing)

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- significance of the topic to housing practitioners
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- contribution to the professional literature

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