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Collaboration

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Keywords
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An academic journal like this one depends on collaboration—from writers, reviewers, and editors. The articles in this issue are instances of collaboration as well, both within and across institutions. They remind us of the many ways we think better together, particularly about providing effective learning communities.

What we know about students' experiences in learning communities is a question addressed in both research articles in this issue. In "Washington Center's Online Survey Validation Study: Surfacing Students' Individual and Collective Understanding of Their Learning Community Experiences," Gillies Malnarich (Washington Center), Maureen Pettitt (Skagit Valley College), and Jack Mino (Holyoke Community College) describe their use of quantitative and qualitative methods to establish the validity of the online survey designed to assess students' experiences in learning communities; they report on new insights about what students are learning from one another. They also present a companion tool to the survey, the Peer-to-Peer Reflection Protocol, which was developed as a way to organize collective reflective inquiry in learning community classrooms.

Sometimes claims about the benefits for students of participating in learning communities are challenged because of the potential for self-selection bias. In "Identical Profiles, Different Paths: Addressing Self-selection Bias in Learning Community Cohorts," Stephanie Zobac, Julia Spears, and Gregory Barker (Northern Illinois University) explain their use of "bootstrapping," a method of choosing equivalent comparison groups, to show that learning communities at their institution positively impact student academic achievement and retention. This methodology offers other campuses an approach to address self-selection bias.

This issue's *Practices from the Field* explore two strategies for using learning communities to engage students in learning about science and the natural world. In "Core Sciences in First-Year Learning Communities," Nicholas Richardson, Patricia A. Tooker, and Amy Eshleman from Wagner College present a strategy for linking three courses: a general chemistry course, a course in another discipline, and a Reflective Tutorial, a class dedicated to critical thinking, writing, reflection, and practical application. This tutorial is jointly designed by the instructors of the other two courses and replaces a first-year writing course.

"An Integrated Interdisciplinary Faculty-Student Learning Community Focused on Water Issues: A Case Study" describes what happens when the impetus for a learning community comes from students, and faculty respond to the request. Cathy Willermet, Eron Drake, Anja Mueller, Stephen J. Juris, Pratik Chhetri, and Samik Upadhaya describe how faculty at Central Michigan University formed a faculty learning community to design the course, *Water as Life, Death and Power*, how they involved the students as co-designers and co-teachers, and how, together, they developed strategies to assess its effectiveness.

The two *Perspectives* represent two ends of a spectrum. In "Put Me In Coach! Making the Academic Learning Community an Option for Student-Athletes," Geoffrey P. Mamerow (University of Wisconsin-Madison) and Kristina M. Navarro (University of Oklahoma-Norman) urge readers to create learning communities that support the academic success of student athletes, arguing that, to date, the field has not done enough in this regard.

In contrast to this call for new programs, Newland Charles Peterson and Miles McCrimmon (J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College) reflect on how their institution's learning community program has grown and evolved over a ten-year period. Their perspective reminds us that learning communities are sustained by a rich web of cross-discipline and cross-campus collaborations.

In the *Reader's Response*, Sonja Wiedenhaupt (The Evergreen State College) reflects on Julie Watt's article on hyperbonding (v1 n3), and offers an alternative explanation for how we can use our power as teachers to help students productively engage in learning together. Through her response to Watt's article, Wiedenhaupt reinforces this journal's purpose: to extend and enrich our collective conversations about learning community practice.

We welcome your contributions in any form, from responses to articles to articles themselves. Happy reading!