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Notes on this issue

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Abstract

Contributions in research, practices from the field, perspectives, and a book review, all enhance our community focus on teaching and learning.

Cover Page Footnote

Thanks to all the reviewers whose hard work helped shape this issue!

This issue of the journal represents the labor and love of many people—the authors and their colleagues, who are engaged in doing learning community work across the country; the reviewers, who contribute their time and attention to help shape these manuscripts so that they will be of use to our readers; and the editorial team, who spend hours working with authors and reviewers. I am writing the introduction to this issue with deep gratitude for all the work represented here. As the articles attest, our field is growing, and perhaps more important given this journal, we are getting better collectively at documenting our practice and conducting research that matters.

The *Research* article in this issue examines a critical question for campuses across the country: can participating in a learning community help students develop multicultural and leadership competencies? In "Learning Communities: Foundations for First-Year Students' Development of Pluralistic Outcomes," Krista Soria and Tania Mitchell from the University of Minnesota share the results of a study they did which focused on the associations between first-year students' participation in learning communities and students' self-reported development of both leadership and multicultural competence. Soria and Mitchel used student survey data from the Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) survey, which was administered to undergraduates at six large public universities. The results of their study suggest that learning communities may play a role in helping students develop leadership in multicultural competence, but as the authors suggest, further research is needed to better understand how, and why, learning communities have these effects.

The *Practice* articles in this issue begin with two that focus on the classroom. In "Mindset About Intelligence and Meaningful and Mindful Effort," Janice Wiersma, Barbara Licklider, Janette Thompson, Suzanne Hendrich, Cynthia Haynes, and Katherine Thompson describe assignments used by a team of LC instructors at Iowa State University to prompt first year students to reconsider their assumptions about intelligence, monitor their "efforts" in terms of both 'quantity' and quality, and reflect on what they noticed. As one student reported, after implementing these reflective strategies, his hardest class wasn't his hardest class anymore. The authors make the case that learning community classrooms offer particularly fertile grounds for introducing students mindset theory and its implications.

Another *Practice* article focused on the classroom, "When the Due Date is Not the Due Date," by Theresa Mastrianni from Kingsborough Community College, provides a detailed description of assignments used by the author and her teaching partners to help first year students develop better time-management. Recognizing that effective time management is a critical component of college readiness, the LC teaching team introduced students to a variety of strategies, including an integrative calendar, to help build a foundation for ongoing academic

success. The approach to helping students with time management in the context of their academic assignments lends itself to other LC contexts.

The remaining four articles in the *Practice* section of this issue document and evaluate campus efforts to start and sustain LC and LLC programs. In "Joining 'Us': Creating and Maintaining a Discipline-Based Learning Community," Kelly McHugh and Bruce Anderson describe the evolution of a political science-based living-learning community at Florida Southern College. Over three years, McHugh and Anderson worked on strengthening the academic aspects of the residential side of the LLC while simultaneously developing strategies to effectively integrate the two political science courses. They argue compellingly that their LC model could be adapted to other campuses interested in developing major-based LC's with a residential component.

In "Inventing and Implementing LLCs at an HBCU in One Year," Kristen Ericksen and Jonathan Walker from Norfolk State University chronicle an experience familiar to many in our field—responding to an institutional mandate and quickly building a learning community program, a good one! In their article, Ericksen and Walker share lessons learned from various points of view, including the LLC director, a teaching dean, the faculty liaison, and a faculty member.

In "Developing a Comprehensive Learning Community Program," Jamie Workman and Lyn Redington share the first in a planned three-part series, describing the implementation of large learning community program at the University of Northern Iowa. In this article, Workman and Redington provide a historical perspective on their program, including the decision to link the program with the university's strategic plan and the academic master plan. They also took the unusual step of explicitly grounding curriculum development for the program in student development theory, in particular Schlossberg's transition theory.

In "Creating an LBGTQ Learning Community," Kathryn Jaekel explains why and how she implemented a learning community for LBGTQ students and their allies at Iowa State University. The LC was designed to help students create community both in and out of the classroom, become familiar with campus resources, and potentially create more visibility for LBGTQ students and their concerns on campus. Jaekel's reflections about her experiences are valuable for others who are working on creating LCs to support LBGTQ students.

The two *Perspectives* pieces in this issue play with the idea of time. In "It's Time to Count Learning Communities," Jean Henscheid from the University of Idaho argues that we need an accurate count of how many campuses in the U.S. have learning community programs, and also, as part of that count, we need to arrive at a shared definition of what counts as a learning community. In "The Right Time: Building Learning Communities," Deborah Mutnick, from Long Island University-Brooklyn, draws on classical rhetoric to tell the story of the

development of their campus LC program. Her account reflects the messy complexity of program development and principled faculty leadership.

We are publishing our first *Review* in this issue. Sarah Fox reviews *Writing American Cultures: Stories of Identity, Community, and Place*, edited by Sam Schrager. The book, a collection of ethnographic essays produced by students in a year-long learning community at The Evergreen State College, illustrates the critically engaged scholarship undergraduate students are capable of doing, when given the opportunity.

The multiple voices present in this issue represent the wide range of work people are doing on large and small campuses, public and independent, two-year and four-year, to create powerful learning environments for students. As these articles show, we continue to practice the scholarship of integration, adapting ideas from one context to another. We continue to learn how to change our institutions to make them more responsive to our students. We continue to value our collaborative relationships—and to that end, encourage your colleagues to browse this issue of the journal along with the previous ones. And write: about your practices, your research studies, your perspectives on how we can continue to develop our collective expertise.