

2014 Best Practices Symposium Presentation Descriptions

Benefits of Peer Pressure: The Positive Impact of Peer Leader in LCs

Stephanie Zobac, Assistant Director, Office of Student Engagement and Experiential Learning, Northern Illinois University

This presentation will explore the benefits of incorporating upper class Peer Leaders in Learning Communities. The Office of Student Engagement and Experiential Learning pairs each Themed Learning Community (TLC) with an upper class student; each Peer Leader is required to have had experience with the TLC theme and courses, and acts as a mentor to the first-year students enrolled in the TLC. Peer Leaders assist with the academic and social transition of TLC participants throughout their first semester at NIU. TLC participants have consistently demonstrated higher GPA and retention rates, even when compared to an equivalent comparison group, indicating the impact of TLCs and their Peer Leaders on first-year success. In addition to positively impacting the first-year students, the Peer Leaders also benefit from their role as they take leadership in assisting first-year students in a variety of capacities, interact with TLC faculty/instructors, and participate in personal and professional development sessions.

The Full Monty: Going All in On the Learning Community

Sarena Lee-Schott, Associate Professor of English and Coordinator of Learning Communities, Thomas Nicholas, Associate Professor of English, and George Streecher, Associate Professor of Humanities, Prairie State College

This presentation addresses the following question: How do two professors with very different teaching styles fully integrate their course objectives, classroom activities, assignments, and grading scales without losing their minds or alienating their students? While there is no formula, we believe our evolving efforts to integrate our teaching styles might provide a useful model for a successful learning community. The key to success is convincing the students that they belong to a genuine community of learning, not just two separate courses with related themes taught by two separate professors. If we want our students to buy into the idea of the learning community, professors need to go all in by modeling that for them in the classroom.

Fighting Words & Numbers: Using Literacy and Math Narratives to Make the Connection between Dev.Ed. and College Success

Geoff Martin, Communications Faculty & Learning Communities Coordinator, and Nanci Calamari, Instructor, College Success Dept., Truman College

This 45-min workshop aims to help faculty and administrators envision stronger curriculum linkages between developmental education classes (English, Reading, and Math) with a College Success-type course. Workshop leaders will share their experience developing an LC, entitled "Fighting Words: Linking Learning with Freedom." Specifically, they will demonstrate the powerful use of literacy and math narratives to help frame, and make explicit, students' personal affect and schema with the English and Math subject-areas. The workshop will explore ways the College Success course can allow space for enlivened and supplemented content through incorporating community voices and connected assignments that expand student experience with the Dev.Ed. "content course." Participants will have the opportunity to brainstorm ways they could adapt these strategies to their specific campus and content areas.

The Joyful Teacher: How Innovation, Preparation, and Best Practices Build Instructional Enthusiasm

Christine Grela, Instructor of Psychology, and Anne Humphrey, Instructor of English, McHenry County College

This presentation will focus on the variety of forms learning communities can take including fully combined courses (both content-content and content-skill), linked learning communities, and developmental learning communities. We have found that the experiences teaching a variety of learning communities can help maintain enthusiasm, promote innovation, and ensure best practices through preparation, collaboration, and cross-pollination of ideas. In addition to describing the benefits and challenges associated with different types of learning communities, we will provide examples from our marketing campaign as well as sample course assignments across a range of collaborations. Finally, we will briefly discuss our

assessment project in our joint learning community which focuses on study skills such as note-taking, skimming the text, and memory skills.

Learning Communities 2.0

Sarena Lee-Schott, Associate Professor of English and Coordinator of Learning Communities, Loretta M. Kucharczyk, Coordinator of Intentional Advising (Student Success Center), and Craig Mulling, Professor, Social Sciences, Prairie State College

Planning a successful learning community generally involves participating in “tried and true” Learning Communities 101 experimentation, and teaching teams frequently experience the greatest boost of creative, cognitive energy as they pull together the initial pieces of their LC puzzles. However, what happens at the end of a semester as they deconstruct the LC—when they discover that some things worked as planned and others did not? How does a team of faculty muster energy and joy from the successes of an LC and parlay them into addressing the shortcomings? In this presentation, three faculty will share insights on how they examined, revised, and revived a learning community combining First-Year Seminar, Sociology 101, and English 099.

MCC Flying Blind: Piloting a Developmental Learning Communities Cohort

Kate Midday, Learning Communities Chair/ Instructor of English; Anne Humphrey, Instructor of English; Laura Middaugh, Instructor of English; Adriane Hutchinson, Dean of Academic Development; Ellen Zimmerman, Counselor/First Year Experience Coordinator; Jen Roth, SI Leader/Lab Coordinator – Student; Sheila Venkataswamy, Instructor of Sociology; Heidi Boring, Instructor of Math; and Laura Power, Instructor of English, McHenry County College

After a brilliant presentation at the 2011 NLCC from Delta Community College in Bay City, MCC faculty began the process of fashioning their own version of an LC cohort for developmental, at-risk students. Through an intense partnership with Student Services at almost every level, we have completed our first semester of the pilot. The MCC CONNECT2 project has built a developmental Math/Developmental English, fully-integrated Learning Community, and linked it with articulated coursework, mandatory counseling and advising, and a student services lab; our goal is for the cohort of students to move through our one-year program, with increased success rates.

This panel will explain the goals of the project, discuss the advocacy/creation/marketing process of the pilot, share the cooperation aspect that has been central to the idea’s success, and allow time for representatives from all the parties (support, teaching, administrative and student), to talk about their contributions and answer questions. Though MCC is not done with a full year, the creation and implementation process alone has taken more than two years to get off the ground. The results are already exciting enough that MCC has agreed to run another test pilot, and those involved hope to help other LC programs create similar projects to meet the needs of our ever-growing developmental populations.

Innovations in Learning Communities: There’s a Service-Learning Project Hidden in Your Learning Community

Julie D. Dockery, English Professor and Director of Service-Learning, Truman College

This session will demonstrate how a simple service-learning component can be developed in a learning community. Participants will recognize service-learning as a collaborative pedagogy that yields active learning, social engagement and fluid teacher-learner roles. The reciprocity of service-learning –meeting the needs of the community and providing an enhanced learning experience for students– is the ultimate outcome. After this session participants will be able to connect civic engagement and community service opportunities to specific course outcomes while using reflection, a vital role in service-learning, to both facilitate and demonstrate student learning.

Intellectual Property, Paraphrasing and Plagiarism: Fostering Academic Integrity through Learning Communities

Wendell G. Johnson, Social Sciences Librarian, University Libraries, and Meredith Ayers, Science Librarian/University Libraries, Northern Illinois University

The University Libraries at NIU have developed a course, UNIV 105 “(Introduction to Library and Information Research”), which is included in many of our themed learning communities. We developed a hybrid module for this course. Students are asked to summarize, paraphrase, plagiarize and then properly cite an abstract from a newspaper or scholarly article. The stated objective of this module (abstracted from the course syllabus): Understand many of the economic, legal and social issues surrounding the use of information and accesses and uses information ethically and legally.

- understand many of the ethical, legal and socio-economic issues surrounding information and information technology
- acknowledge the use of information sources in communicating the product or performance

At the end of this particular unit, we expect the students to acknowledge the importance of intellectual property, properly cite resources, and recognize the difference between intentional and unintentional plagiarism (and hopefully avoid both). The deliverables for this module include uploading the summaries, etc., to the course management system (Blackboard in our case), proper citations of uploaded material, and responses to the postings of at least three classmates in the online discussion form. The CMS has a link to an interactive citation generator. This module is also available for use in our first-year English courses, as well as to any other faculty member who requests it. Attendees of this session are invited to adapt the module to suit the needs of their own learning communities.

Who Cares?: Using Culturally Relevant Andragogy to Increase Skills and Retention of Culturally Underrepresented Groups.

Keith Sprewer, Instructor/English, Truman College

This 45-min workshop aims to explore the challenges of teaching skill-based, developmental classes (English and Reading) to minority adults who often lack “common” cultural knowledge and often appear disengaged. The workshop leader will share his experience creating developmental Reading-Writing LCs with thematic focuses on marginalized cultural groups (i.e. racial, ethnic, religious, gender, sexually oriented, and socio-economic minorities to name a few). In this workshop, he will present the research on culturally relevant pedagogy and demonstrate its usefulness in the adult, developmental classroom, especially those with high enrollment of members of marginalized groups. The workshop will explore how the offering of such a class or class pairing can enhance learner motivation, skill acquisition, civic engagement, and cultural sensitivity. Participants will have the opportunity to explore options for culturally relevant courses for their student demographic.

How to Help Your LC Math Instructor Create Community in the Classroom

Rachel Johnson and Andrew Kerr, Truman College

When math instructors talk about why they love math, then they can share the motivational lessons students need to pursue their own dreams with confidence. Rachel and Andrew will discuss methods to improve collaboration in the classroom and how to get math teachers to join the Learning Community movement.

CILC Retreat Coaches/Teams Meeting

Charles Pastors, Chair, Retreat Committee

In anticipation of the CILC retreat on May 29 – 31, team members and their CILC coaches will meet to review the agenda for the retreat and address any pertinent issues the teams may have before the retreat.