

2015 Best Practices Symposium Sessions Descriptions

Keynote Presentation: “Are We Reaching Generation Z?”

Allison Spillane, M.S.Ed., Academic Support Specialist, Themed Learning Communities, IUPUI

In a world filled with immediate access to information, social media, and endless opportunities on college campuses, join the conversation on how to connect with Generation Z as we focus on the nature of ‘Gen Z’, how to reach & interact with this generation through learning community recruitment, as well as ways to enhance teaching strategies in the classroom. Translating the ‘Why’ behind what we do in learning community programs is integral in reaching this new generation within higher education. The time is now to be on the cutting edge with Gen Z and advancing and promoting our learning community programs.

Allison Spillane brings the experience and perceptions of a learning community administrator from her time at Northern Illinois University, the University of Connecticut, and most recently, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis. She works with recruitment initiatives and faculty development at IUPUI within the Themed Learning Community Program, a national leader in learning communities, recognized annually in U.S. News and World Report for “Best Learning Communities”. Allison is a two-time presenter at the National Learning Communities Conference, and continues her work with a focus on enhancing the student experience and promoting innovative faculty development.

Session I:

Keynote Presentation Follow-Up Discussion

Allison Spillane, M.S.Ed., Academic Support Specialist, Themed Learning Communities, IUPUI

Ms. Spillane will conduct a roundtable to continue the discussion begun during her Keynote presentation.

Working across Disciplines to Create Meaningful Integration: LCs and Integrative Assignments

Marilyn Lorch, Engaged Learning Coordinator, and Stephanie Kummerer, Instructor, English Department, Northern Illinois University

With the growing popularity of academically based Learning Communities, a concern for many is how to ensure that a student is learning LC topics across multiple disciplines. Integrative assignments are often used to bridge this gap, and incorporate concepts from each class linked within the LC bundle. In this session, faculty and staff from NIU’s office of Student Engagement and Experiential Learning and LC program will share information pertaining to the creation and teaching of Integrative assignments. Examples will be provided of various Integrative Assignments that NIU faculty have implemented. This session will attempt to answer questions such as: How do faculty determine the important components of an integrated learning experience? How might faculty adjust their course schedules to facilitate this kind of assignment? How might a faculty team go about grading these assignments? How can one tell if an integrative assignment has been successful?

The Transitional Bilingual Learning Community: Pairing Academic ESL with General Education Courses

Ana King, Ed.D, Assistant Chair, Communications; Helen Valdez, Assistant Professor, Mathematics; Carlos Martin-Llamazares, College Advisor; Madeline Troche-Rodriguez, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Social Science; and Elia Lopez, Instructor, Humanities, Truman College

Learning communities strive to provide collaborative teaching and learning and the development of academically relevant skills (Zhao and Kuh, 2004). Research shows that learning communities and the use of collaborative pedagogies lead to higher levels of success for academically under-prepared students (Engstrom & Tinto, 2007). The Transitional Bilingual Learning Community (TBLC) is a two-semester, full-time community college program, where Latino freshman students who would normally not be considered ready for college-level courses, due to their lack of English language proficiency, form a cohort and take general education courses concurrently with ESL and developmental math courses. The TBLC also incorporates an embedded bilingual academic advisor and a parental component, where the students and their parents address ways to increase students’ persistence and success. Statistics show that TBLC students receive associate degrees at four times the rate of non-TBLC students and transfer with an associate degree in hand at seven times the rate of non-TBLC students at the college. This presentation will briefly discuss highlights of this learning community and then focus on the pairing of two particular courses, ESLINTG 100: Advanced Integrated ESL Reading and Writing and Sociology 201: Introduction to the Study of Society, and how the instructors link student learning outcomes, curricula, assignments, and

assessments. The presenters will then demonstrate how these two courses collaborate to teach the sociological concepts of “the sociological imagination” and “personal biography” along with the academic writing skills of summarization, argumentation, and incorporation of sources.

Both the faculty and students involved in fall 2012 pilot of Benedictine’s *Emerging Scholars Learning Community* evaluated the program quite positively, and we will be offering two sections of the learning community in the fall 2013 semester. We believe that our *Emerging Scholars Learning Community* offers an easily adaptable and cost effective model for introducing learning communities on campus.

Show Me the Water: A Modified Community Learning, Theme Based, Class Experience

Carla Quickel, Associate Professor, Business Administration; Anthony Ramey, Program Chair Business Administration; and Michelle Hagan Short, Dept. Chair Office Administration and Logistics Management, Ivy Tech Community College

Student communities were formed from three distinct business classes at Ivy Tech Community College to create self-directed businesses. Each student-led organization raised capital to fund a water-themed community outreach project. Professors Ramey, Hagan-Short and Quickel will share their experience team-teaching Principles of Management, Business Ethics, and Business Communication students using a hybrid class setting, while achieving course objectives for each class.

The session will include an overview of the evolution of the water project class which is currently being offered for the third consecutive semester. An interactive portion will allow session participants to take part in a simulated planning session used in the classroom and a test of one of the products distributed by a student business.

Description of Interactive Element of Session:

Session participants will work in teams to simulate the business planning component of the class. Participants will also have the opportunity for a hands-on experience to test water filtration straws, the product of one of the student-led businesses who raised capital and sent the straws to residents of Haiti. An interactive game using water facts will also provide idea-starters for session participants to apply a water theme to their classes.

Session II:

Teaching Social Justice in Underserved Communities: Turning Challenges into Opportunities

India Stewart, Ph.D., and Jonathan Michelon, Ph.D., Social Science/ Learning Community: Sociology and Education, Eastfield College

Students from traditionally underserved communities (low to moderate income, first-generation college students, those with limited English proficiency, and other marginalized populations) often have little experience with social justice initiatives and may have difficulty conceptualizing the meaning of social justice itself. This student population often faces unique challenges related to involvement with initiatives of this genre. In this highly interactive session we will emphasize interpersonal relations, multidimensional communication and collaborative learning activities that address the unique needs of these students and empower them to be catalysts for change in their own communities.

Coloring Outside the Lines: Ideas for Breaking Out of Traditional Learning Communities

Shanon Dickerson, Foreign Language Instructor & Learning Communities Advisor / Humanities & Fine Arts, Carl Sandburg College

Typically, Learning Communities include team-taught courses in general education. Come see how Sandburg has gone beyond the usual classroom experience by including elements such as honors, career related courses (nursing, criminal justice and professional Spanish), research/SPSS lab, women’s studies, cultural trips abroad and even writing a book!

Earth Abides: Linking Writing and Earth Science in a First Year LC

Geoff Martin, Instructor, Communications and Joy Walker, Associate Professor, Physical Science & Engineering, Truman College

Climate Change is an increasingly 'hot' topic that demands our attention and a range of understandings. But the science is often intimidating, and the political and cultural debates can be overwhelming in their accusations and polarization. "Earth Abides: How Catastrophes Shape Our Planet & Touch Our Lives" is a First Year LC at Truman College that uses the overarching issue of climate change as a method of connecting foundational concepts of Earth Sciences and Communications theory together, grounding students in a supportive learning environment that guides them through interdisciplinary thinking, learning, and writing. This session will begin with an interactive entry-point into the topic and then proceed with a fuller description of this LC linkage--its designs, its successes, and its potentials. Handouts will be provided.

Building Your LCs: Not Just Stacking Courses Together, but Combining Them in the Active Learning Blender

Charles Pastors, J.D., Ph.D./Principal of *QUEST*

The session is designed for two tracks of participants: Experienced LC Faculty and Aspiring LC faculty. They will work from their last LC syllabus, or from the syllabus of the course they want to incorporate into a LC. The session will be largely hands-on, with participants identifying how their LC fits into the general LC models, how participants create the blended content in their LC, how they place their student learning outcomes over that blended content; and, time permitting [possibly on their own, post-session], how to identify and design specific student activities to demonstrate achievement of those outcomes and how that achievement is measured [or assessed]. "Aspiring LC Fac," will find that working with their "aspiring LC partner(s)" during the session will be most useful.

Session III:

Creating Long-Term Learning Opportunities: Oral History as Learning Community

Julie A. Wroblewski, Archivist/Special Collections Librarian, Benedictine University

With learning communities now constituting a significant growing national movement in education, institutions have had both the opportunity to learn from early efforts and to identify challenges in creating and maintaining successful programs. In an ideal situation, a learning community creates a learning experience that persists beyond students' initial involvement and affects their engagement and development throughout their education. Community oral history projects provide an opportunity to create long-term learning and engagement for students because of the rich opportunity for human interaction, the exposure to different kinds of information, and the ability for students to determine and shepherd their own lines of inquiry. Oral history projects can also provide a way to address common learning community challenges of defining purpose for learning communities in the curriculum, creating diversity in participation and perspective, and breaking down institutional barriers to interdisciplinary and collaborative work. In this session, we will explore the logistics, challenges, and outcomes encountered by Benedictine University as they have developed their Interfaith Oral History project as a new learning community.

The Collision of the Business World and the Public Speaking World

Tim Pierce, Coordinator, COMS 100 and Bill McCoy, Director, BELIEF Initiative, College of Business, Northern Illinois University

Business and Society, a Themed Learning Community that combines UBUS 101 (Business Disciplines and Issues) with COMS 100 (Fundamentals of Oral Communication) that combines the two classes in such a way that creates a seamless 6 credit hour experience. We will talk about how working together and being in each other classes over the years creates the necessary mix for a cross-college educational experience. We will recount our trials and tribulations along the way, our levels of administrative support between our respective colleges and university, and how we work together as instructors.

Behind-the-Scenes LC Logistics: How to Institutionalize Your LCs to Increase Enrollment

Elizabeth Rosenthal, Director of Developmental Education, Office of Instruction; Geoff Martin, LC Coordinator, Communications Faculty; and Faith Walls, College Advisor

This session will focus on the often overlooked but absolutely crucial behind-the-scenes work that needs to happen to ensure enrollment in a college's LC offerings. Truman's LC Team will present on how Student Services, the Office of Instruction, and LC faculty have been working together to integrate paired courses into the registration process. The session will focus on LC advisor training, program marketing revamp, and technical and systematic logistics that have been streamlined and enhanced to better promote paired courses and to allow for easier registration.