



CONSORTIUM FOR ILLINOIS LEARNING COMMUNITIES

2022 Best Practices Symposium Session Descriptions

Plenary Session (9:00 – 9:50 AM; Wintrust 908):

Fostering Inclusion, Belonging, and Equity through Learning Communities

Dr. Michael Nguyen, Clinical Asst. Prof. of Environmental Science, Dr. Danielle Cochran, Clinical Asst. Prof. of Literature and Writing, David Keys, Asst. Dean for Student Success, Dr. Jennifer Armstrong, Clinical Associate Prof. of Communication, Dr. Aisha Raees, Clinical Associate Prof. of Philosophy Arrupe College of Loyola University Chicago

A conducive learning environment fosters a sense of belonging and community. The range of support and opportunities offered inside and outside the classroom (e.g., communities, programming, collaborative advising) can alleviate “imposter” syndrome and promote student success. Join us to learn about Arrupe College’s learning communities aimed at fostering inclusion, belonging, and equity and hear from current and past students about their experiences in the different programs.

Breakout Session I (10:00 – 10:50 AM):

The Impact of STEM (and STEM-adjacent) Faculty Communities of Practice (Room 807)

Susan McCarthy, Clinical Assistant Professor, Arrupe College of Loyola University Chicago; Susan Haarman, Associate Director, Center for Engaged Learning, Teaching and Scholarship, Loyola University Chicago; Patrick Green, Executive Director, Center for Engaged Learning, Teaching and Scholarship, Loyola University Chicago

Successful faculty development often comes in the form of communities of practice that consider their unique challenges without completely homogenizing the space. As a result, spaces that are interdisciplinary across “sister disciplines” can become thriving zones of innovation, dialogue, and support for STEM (and STEM-adjacent) faculty. Using Loyola University Chicago’s STEM Faculty Learning Community as a case study, the session will showcase how the group utilizes this shared disciplinary identity across domain, community, and practice and leverages both the commonalities and differences to improve teaching and learning, discuss applicable equity issues, and receive support.

The Devil’s in the Details: Assessing Challenges to Assessing Learning Communities (Room 1001)

Dr. James Allen, Professor of English and Learning Communities Director, Dr. Sarah Butler, Professor of Psychology, and Kayla Bandy, Research Analyst, Research & Analytics, College of DuPage

In a recent LCA-sponsored webinar, “A Framework to Evaluate Learning Communities,” Senior Data Scientist Rajeeb L. Das challenged us to develop assessment practices of high-impact practices, such as learning communities, that include more rigorous experimental design. In our presentation, we will discuss the complexities of meeting that challenge by discussing both previous research we have done on our LCs, which will highlight the various complicating variables in our research, along with our current efforts to do quantitative and qualitative assessment of specific elements of our LC program.

Breakout Session II (11:00 – 11:50 AM)

Not Another Icebreaker! Community Formation that Works (Room 807)

Tom Hartzell, Coordinator of Residential Collegiate Programs/Sustainability and Environmental Education Department, Goshen College (Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center campus)

Helping our learners come together as a community at the start of a LC experience plays a huge role in determining its success. Doing so in a way that is intentionally inclusive and equitable for all students is a critical component. In this session we will discuss what helps and what hinders that process, sharing from our own experiences. We will also engage in a couple of interactive community formation activities, so participants can see how they work in practice.

Making an Impact: Learning Communities, the First Year Experience, and Career Pathways, at the Community College (Room 1001)

Kate Middy, Learning Communities Chair/ Instructor of English, and Dr. Daniela Broderick, Executive Dean of Arts and Humanities, McHenry County College

McHenry County College Dean of Arts and Humanities and the Learning Communities Chair are working to start a high impact practices pilot, centered around student success. They are in Phase II of a 2023 launch, where Learning Communities will be offered that fit into specific guided pathways, co-taught by two faculty, one of whom will also embed the first-year experience course (MCC 101) into the LC. These Super Twofers will provide first semester freshman with a high-touch Twofers course for classes in their prospective fields, with the goal of increased retention, persistence, achievement, and expedited immersion into their future areas of focus. This session will use the Title III grant initiative and an intense collaboration with Student Affairs to outline this pilot model. They will explain the hows and whys of the process and offer an open discussion about how this model might work for any college that wants to use what already works for students to increase the impact of the pathways movement to bolster interest and support of Learning Communities.

Lunch (12:00 – 12:45 PM; Wintrust 908)

Breakout Sessions III (1:00 – 1:50 PM):

Student Stories Matter: Using Autobiographical Writing to Create Inclusive Communities (Room 807)

James Gould, Emeritus Instructor of Philosophy, and Ted Hazelgrove, Instructor of English, McHenry County College

Our Heroes and Villains LC combined philosophical ethics with English composition and literature. Incoming students can find the critical thinking required to integrate philosophy and literature daunting. Tapping into something familiar—their own life experiences—as a way to unlock the meaning of moral concepts is an engaging strategy for intimidated first-year students. Rather than depending on instructor-guided unpacking of how literature texts illustrate philosophical concepts, when students examine their own experiences, their comprehension is more intuitive and internalized. Everyone struggles with anger and forgiveness, fear and courage, self-control and yielding to temptation. The universality of these experiences allows all students to write—and to write confidently and with insight—about their experience and to combine it with philosophical reflection. Sharing stories equalizes the relationship of teachers to students and of students to students—it legitimizes each student's experience and emphasizes the common humanity we all share.

Empowering Authenticity: Activities to Prepare Gen Z for Their World of Work (Room 1001)

Lauren Morgan, Professor of Speech Communication, and Devin Chambers, Counselor, Counseling, Advising and Transfer, College of DuPage

Gen Z is a generation unlike any other. They are a diverse generation who are disrupting expectations and social norms and challenging all of us to get out of our comfort zones as we help them prepare for the post-pandemic world of work. Join us to learn and experience some of the activities we use in our learning community that help students define and speak about their values and transferrable skills as a foundation for building an authentic, meaningful career.

Symposium Wrap-up (2:00 – 2:30 PM; Wintrust 908)

Attendees will gather for some final thoughts and observations on the symposium.