

# **First-Year Learning Communities Task Force Report**

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## Introduction

This report is intended to be a resource and guide for the future development of first-year seminar, learning communities, and living learning communities at TAMU-CC. The task force researched these interventions, paying attention to affinity groups, and major- and theme-based options, considering different durations and credit hour options, with our current TAMU-CC students in mind. The committee has discussed several models of learning communities and first-year seminars. The results of these discussions are summarized below.

## Process

The FYLC Task Force was formed and was given its charge by Dean Campbell on Oct. 15, 2021. The task force was divided into sub-committees that investigated these topics:

- Flexible/Alternative Models for Seminar
- Living Learning Communities
- Affinity Group interventions
- Major-based Learning Communities/FYS
- Theme-based Learning Communities/FYS

The FYLC Task Force met every two weeks (10/29, 11/5, 11/19, and 12/09), receiving reports from the sub-committees and discussing the ideas that were being researched. In addition, members brought in information from the mathematics task force, the retention and student success council, and other efforts happening simultaneously. On December 9, 2021, the task force met for an extended retreat to review our current first-year learning communities program (FYLCP), the ideas presented by the task force, and the current state of initiatives in SEAS and university housing focused on male students of color and affinity group initiatives and living learning communities.

## First-Year Seminar

First-Year Seminar (FYS) is the primary intervention for first-year student success at TAMU-CC. It teaches the SLOs in an integrative manner, connecting them to linked class content, associated disciplines, and/or themes. The current model at TAMU-CC is all full-time first-year students are required to take the 1 SCH model that meets for 2 lecture hours twice in their first year. Currently, the course is usually co-req'd to one or more other classes, although an independent model exists for students who need it. The task force researched several models of first-year seminars exist that could provide focused and customized experiences for our different populations of first-year students.

Models of FYS range along a spectrum of focus, from providing intensive academic support to promoting social and interest/affinity-based connections, especially when it is part of a living (residential) learning community (Leibowitz). All seminars must teach the SLOs and introduce college knowledge and information literacy, to support our QEP (beginning in Fall 2022) and promote student success. We currently have experience providing the major-based, college success, and independent FYS models. We could develop additional models for residential/living learning communities and FIGs – First-Year Interest Group Seminars.

### **Major-based FYS**

TAMU-CC currently offers major-based FYS for majors/pre-majors that are linked to specific required classes for those populations in NURS, COSC, ENGR, MUSI, ARTS/GRDS, THEA, BIOL/BIMS/CHEM, GEOL/ESCI. These FYS support challenging (high DFW) courses and provide major-specific pathways to increase success and retention. At K State, focused LCs targeted students in College of Engineering, Ag, and Business. Those colleges & faculty mentored and provided specific curriculum for students.

This model can provide tailored academic support, peer mentors, and/or advising; connections to CASA services; instructor expertise in the subject area; visiting faculty and/or staff from majors to encourage major/career visioning and planning (especially in second semester). A full-year experience provides targeted academic support for transitioning to college and challenging classes and, while the spring course provides planning/advising on the academic pathway into major and career.

### **College Success FYS**

The college-success seminar has been designed for TSI-liable students and/or those on probation. These FYS sections support the core English/Mathematics course(s) and developmental co-req courses. These seminars can provide tailored academic support, peer mentors, and/or advising; connections to CASA/grant-support/bridge services; instructor expertise in college success, peer mentoring, and underserved populations (including first-gen); intrusive advising and individual learning plans incorporated into courses.

### **Independent FYS**

This model is offered online for students who are upper-division and who failed seminar the first time or did not take it. It also works for non-traditional students. It is composed of online modules focused on reflection, learning, and career preparation. This could be revised into the short term/CBE seminar.

### **First-year Interest Group Seminar (FIGS)**

FIGS are thematic and based on interests. They frequently include HIPs like close contact with faculty members and high-interest topics, experiential learning opportunities (service learning, co-curricular tie-ins, other HIPs), and college knowledge (including Information Literacy). These sections could be coordinated with core requirements (POLS, HIST, PSYC, SOCI) or major requirements (as optional add-ons or schedule blocks based on interests/themes).

### **FIGS and First-Year Electives**

If seminar were required only once, elective lower-division courses or FIGS could be offered to allow students to delve into areas of interest, take advantage of experiential learning opportunities, or "fill in" schedules as they take pre-requisites for their majors (as is frequently needed for mathematics and science classes). As electives for those students with more openness in their schedules, these courses could be exploratory and focused on students' individual development and growth, or on major content and academic success. These first-

year courses could help students explore their values, beliefs, and options for majors and careers, working closely with faculty on topics and themes that they choose.

### **Residential FYS**

Seminar model that enrolls students who are living together w/shared interests/affinity groups, and/or majors/colleges. Provides learning connection to the residential experience.

### **Short Term/CBE FYS**

Seminar model that enrolls students who have most of their core done, those who are repeating/transferring, non-traditional students, BAAS, Univ Studies. Structure: online, short term (7 weeks), and/or CBE possible.

### **Key Elements for Student Success in FYS**

The task force discussed the elements that are necessary to make FYS a valuable experience.

- Skills building, "College Knowledge." Coordinating with a core/major course provides the context and need to learn skills like reading, studying, problem solving, teamwork, presenting, writing, etc. Two or three SCH could provide more time for skills building, and the FYS could also do leadership, DEI, self-identity, intercultural competency.
- Understanding individual learning style/behaviors for success.

### **FYS and Experiential Learning**

Since we have a large percentage of our FY population who are not living on campus, we could supplement/strengthen any FYS experience with out-of-class experiences. Formalizing our collaboration with SEAS in a service-learning partnership might be an immediate step that could achieve progress in this area. The Student Volunteer Association (SVA) and other orgs have service learning as a mission. In general, there is a great focus on service in SEAS. FYS could incentivize and/or require participation in Giving Tuesday (Fall) and the Big Event (Spring). SEAS can manage logistics. Additionally, there is service-focused programming throughout the year.

The Task Force raised these questions re: integrating SEAS into FIGS for further discussion, possibly in the Student Success Council:

- How can we use student orgs to help or make a greater tie to co-curricular and FYS?
- How could we better leverage those connections?
- Who is going to be coaching/guiding in FIGS? Success in these groups (FIGS or LCs) could have the opportunity to lead/mentor in a multi-year LLC or other intervention.
- Could ICA tie in academically w/core course(s), possible service-learning opportunities?
- Frats/Sororities? These orgs have not had support, not necessarily active.

### **FYS Structure (SCH, Requirements)**

The current model at TAMU-CC is all full-time first-year students are required to take the 1 SCH model that meets for 2 lecture hours twice in their first year. Changing the credit hours, the 2-course requirement, and unlinking the class from other content impacts how the course will be taught (discussed above), but also impacts students' schedules, their degree plans, support

offered for students, and faculty workloads. There are four elements here that define the structure of FYS at TAMUCC. These are:

- (1) 1 SCH per course,
- (2) A full-year experience (2 sections), and
- (3) FYS exempted from the 120-hour mandate for degree plans
- (4) FYS 1 SCH counted as 2 faculty workload hours

### ***Student Credit Hours: Changing from One to Three SCH FYS***

Advantages of changing from a 1 SCH to 3 SCH seminar are that the additional hour would allow the course to have more time in that semester to teach the SLOs, which include Integrative Learning, Lifelong Learning, Higher Education Navigation, Academic Skill Development; address student needs and approach topics/themes and/or conduct programs on leadership, DEI, self-identity, or intercultural competencies. 3 SCH would give more time for all the regular seminar activities, including relationship building with faculty and staff (peer mentors, etc.), social bonding among students, and a developing a sense of belongingness fostered by in-class/out-of-class activities, including connected or encouraged co-curricular events, major-based events, resources, and student organizations of all kinds. The 3 SCH model have great potential for collaboration and coordination among different campus divisions within FYS, including both academic and non-academic offices. A 3 SCH course would encourage students to take the grade of the course more seriously.

### ***Full Year Experience: One or Two Sections of FYS***

Some students – especially the non-traditional adults and high-achieving students – could potentially benefit by taking one required seminar and having an option to take a second, which might be an elective that is thematic, tied to experiential learning, and/or career-focused. However, for TSI-liable students and those majors requiring a year of academic support for challenging coursework, two semesters should be required.

Evidence from our program shows that students who take a full year of FYS do better and are retained better than those that do not. On average, students who chose not to take UNIV 1102 had a lower spring GPA and were retained at lower rates (see below). The red line shows those who took the full year of FYS between 2010 and 2019, while the blue line shows those who took only UNIV 1101 in the same period. The great majority take both; about 75-150 students each year take only the first class.

## SPRING GPA BASED ON 1102 REGISTRATION, 2010-2019 COHORTS

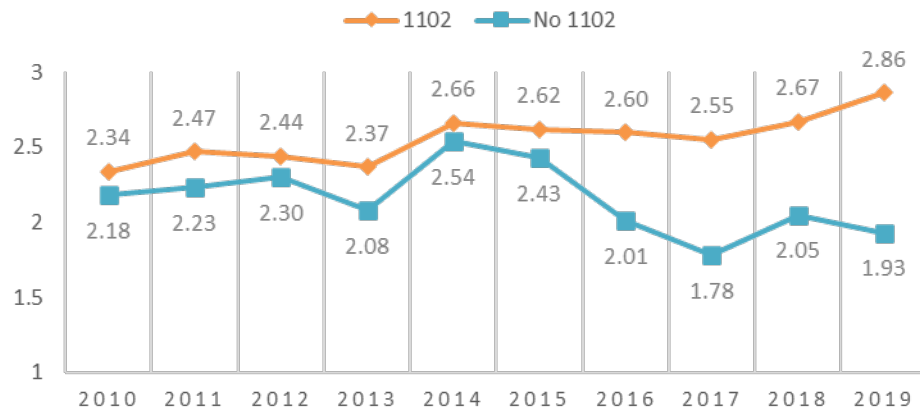


Figure 1. Spring-semester GPA comparison for FTIC students registered in UNIV 1102 during their second semester vs. students who did not take 1102 their second semester. (Note: A catalog change was made in 2015 to require all full-time FTIC students take both semesters of Seminar; prior to this change, FTIC students with significant dual/AP credit could opt out of one/both semesters.)

## Retention Based on Spring 1102 Participation, 2010-2019

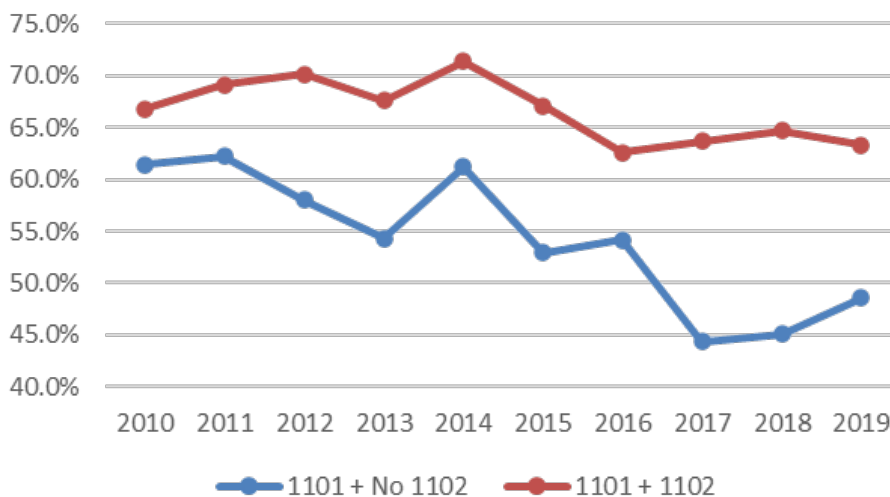


Figure 2. One-year retention comparison for FTIC students who register in only one semester of Seminar (UNIV 1101 in fall) vs. both semesters (UNIV 1101 in fall + UNIV 1102 in Spring). Roughly 100-150 students each spring choose not to register for UNIV 1102.



In addition to GPA and retention numbers, survey data shows that many students appreciate seminar, that they will miss the FYS experience beyond the first year, and that the spring seminar provides valuable career and major planning focusing and preparation. A sampling of student comments from the Spring 2020 FYLCP survey is provided below.

**Table 1: Spring 2020 (Covid-pivot semester) FYLCP Survey Responses**

Definitely the most impactful experience in my learning community was the Freshmen Seminar course that combined the other two parts of my LC together. Although I am sure I will remember the other two courses throughout my college life, the interactions, experiences, and learning I did during Freshmen Seminar are some that I believe I will remember for the rest of my life. When I think back on both my Fall and Spring together most of the memories come from those created in this course. Having projects, making friends, having the opinion that I had some of the best professors for both Fall and Spring were all contributors.
This semester has been rocky, considering the majority of it was spent away from campus, away from classmates and professors, and online. Freshman year is hard enough, learning how to handle and manage things completely on your own. Coming from high school and getting to be a kid, to being thrown into college. I am glad that I was in a learning community, and had a number of people to help me during the transition to fully online courses. Truth be told, I'm not sure I could have done it on my own. It was extremely helpful to have people in my corner during this time.
I think probably the most impactful thing about this semester was the fact that our teachers genuinely cared about us. Every class, our professors would ask us how we were doing and tell us how they were doing in turn. They treated us like human beings, and were very understanding. In our learning community, you could feel comfortable enough to email them and tell them you were going through a rough time and they would understand. If someone persistently didn't show up to class, our teachers would ask us to check up on our classmate and to see how they were doing. They were genuinely concerned with all of us and I found that to be the most impactful thing of all. I will always be grateful to them for making my first year at college a little easier.
I think the most impactful experience I have had in my learning community was learning more about my intended career pathway to the point where I am sure what I want to do. Before the class I was very undecided mainly because I was not sure what I was completely getting myself into.
My most impactful experience was organization that I learned from XXXXX. At the beginning of the semester I was going through a lot emotionally and it definitely impacted my grades. I went from almost being on dean's list last semester (was 0.025 away) to almost failing in all of my classes. By being able to talk with her and explain what was going on, I felt very comfortable and assured when she gave me advice both emotionally and academically. By teaching organizational skills in class, I implemented those skills into my everyday life which calms my anxiety and has improved my grades. I now have hope that I will finish the semester with a 4.0 and I'd like to thank XXXXX because I couldn't have done it without her.

My learning community was the only class that provided me with a place to talk about some of my fears surrounding the coronavirus. All of my other classes avoided the issue and would only mention it in some of the emails sent out very briefly. Professor XXXXX asked us how we were transitioning and what all was going on with us individually. Just by being able to type out everything going through my head and send it into a professor who I knew cares about me and my well-being was extremely stress-relieving.

One of the most impactful experiences I had as part of this learning community was the personal growth and reflection it took on for me. It really helped me assure myself of my career path choice.

I think going through the learning communities, especially the one I had this semester, helped me figure out what I want to do with my life and my goals for college and outside of it. Even though they are not set and I am still definitely working on my goals, I think the learning communities has helped me get an idea of it.

### ***FYS Student Credit Hours and the 120 Hour Limit***

All full-time first-year students are required to register for both UNIV 1101 and 1102; however, because these courses are not required of part-time students, the two SCH have not been counted in the mandated 120-hour limit for undergraduate degrees.

Changing the 2 SCH credit hours for seminar to 3 SCH will cause resistance from those majors that are at or above 120 hours, if those majors are required to count it in their degree plans and as a result, it increases the total credit hours for their majors. Some majors may have difficulty fitting a 3 SCH course into their first-year degree plan.

### ***Faculty Workload***

In addition, workload for the faculty teaching these FYS courses will be balanced with the expectations of other departments (15 hours or 5 sections for full-time professional track faculty (PTF) per long semester).

### ***Catalog Change***

The process of changing FYS from one to three SCH or requiring one section instead of two will require a course change to be approved by the faculty in DINS, the college curriculum committee, and SAMC and CLA, as well as being approved by faculty senate and the university curriculum committee. If changes are proposed and approved within the department by March 1, 2022, the change would go through the process to be implemented in Fall 2023.

### ***Resources and Timeline***

To revise the way that FYS is taught for the various populations without being linked to other courses will require a redesign of UNIV 1101 and 1102. We recommend a team of FYS faculty be given stipends to redesign and prepare their colleagues for this change. Additional time, staff, and resources will be required for the development of FIGS and Residential Seminars models, which will require pre-planning to identify interested faculty, develop themes, identify housing, and plan co-curricular experiences for those models. The planning for residential seminars will

require coordination with SEAS and housing to determine target populations, secure space, and develop recruitment materials.

### **Learning Communities and Living Learning Communities**

The positive impact of learning communities on student success is supported by data over many years. While there are many elements to learning communities, organizing students into smaller groups in common courses to help them integrate their learning, form support networks, and be socialized to the expectations and practices of higher education are the main features of all learning communities.

“Learning communities emphasize collaborative partnerships between students, faculty, and staff, and attempt to restructure the university curriculum to address *structural* barriers to educational excellence.” *Center for Engaged Learning*, Elon College.

Learning communities help students – especially first generation and underserved students – to rise to the challenges of higher education, to weather the difficulties, and to find pathways that are meaningful to them to help them achieve their life goals.

### **Learning Communities (LCs)**

Non-residential learning communities are formed by students’ enrollment in two or more linked courses. Depending on the model of LC, there will be varying levels of coordination to specific courses or disciplines; however, there will always be learning that is integrative and high impact. These can be offered to students at any level. Enrollment depends on interest, major, and/or college, depending on the design and structure of the LC. Review of LC proposals should require clear connections between/across disciplines or courses, as well as connections between academic content and co-curricular learning and/or other HIPs. LCs can be proposed by teams of faculty.

### **Course Linking for Academic Support**

LCs can provide the structure for various interventions and promote a sense of belongingness for students. Learning communities help students learn together, providing the benefits of shared academic/intellectual content and social/interactive experiences.

### **Major-based and Thematic LCs**

These LCs can provide a thematic or affinity-group connecting point where students will experience integrated academic content and HIPs, including experiential learning. Major-based LCs can provide an intellectual home for major/college specific content, interests, culture, and support. Faculty can guide the acclimation to the expectations of the major/discipline. More advanced students can serve as peer mentors.

Some hard linking (co-requisites) may be needed to promote student success if/when seats are severely restricted, majors/colleges request co-requisite seminar, or curriculum and/or supports need to be tightly integrated. Linking or restricting some seats in lectures with very limited seating, we can guarantee access for high-demand courses for first-year majors/pre-

majors like nursing to A&P, Biology, and Chemistry, and coordinate academic support with peer mentors and advising.

### **College Success LCs**

If we have students who need targeted academic support, we could retain some sections of FYS for particular majors or challenging courses and link them to those courses. We could either restrict enrollment by major/college, and/or use pre-enrollment, or use co-requisites. Formed around College Success FYS, these could provide a success-focused, welcoming space for students to build relationships, develop college knowledge and success skills, and connect to campus resources. Learning communities have been shown to provide support for STEM students with low mathematics placement scores and those who are TSI liable in mathematics (Sweeder et al, 2019). At TAMUCC, mathematics has determined that having the support of a learning community connection (the same students in multiple classes together) improves attendance and outcomes, especially in the developmental learning communities (Murphy & Hartlaub, 2017). The mathematics task force supports the continuation and expansion of these efforts.

### **Living Learning Communities (LLCs)**

Creating effective LLCs within campus housing positively affect students' academic and co-curricular experience "by providing a community that fosters great faculty and peer interaction, increased opportunities for coordinated learning activities and an academically and socially supportive living environment" (Inkeles & Weisman, 2003, p. 335). Given the benefits of LLCs (as well as Themed and Affinity housing communities), it is highly recommended that TAMU-CC work to strengthen current residential communities and work toward developing and facilitating more in the future.

### **LLCs & Student Success**

Through the creation of close-knit communities both inside and outside of the classroom through involvement in LLCs students develop a higher sense of belonging, display greater usage of campus support services, interact with faculty at increased rates, and exhibit overall higher academic success when compared to non-participating residents (Inkeles & Weisman, 2003; Garret & Zabriskie, 2003). Recent data from the Association of College and University Housing Officers-International (ACUHO-I, 2021) also indicates:

- Increased persistence for participating residents when compared to non-participating residents (+2.2%)
- Higher for male students (+4.7%)

LLCs are:

- Dedicated residential communities where students share a common academic focus
- Connected to academic class(es)
- Provide supplementary academic and social engagement and support

### Residential Themed (TCs) and Affinity Communities (ACs)

Themed (social) housing and Affinity-based (identity-based) housing are versions of living learning communities that are not decidedly academic in nature. Both include:

- A dedicated residential community
- Students who share a common focus and learn together
- May/may not be connected to academic coursework, major, or college
- Supplementary engagement and community building

### LLCs Require Collaboration Across the University

To create an effective LLC there must be support, buy-in, and collaboration across campus. Due to the need for increased buy-in, support, and collaboration, the creation of LLCs takes a significant amount of time. TAMUCC will need to identify a collaborative team and allocate the necessary resources for further expansion of the LLCs within Islander Housing.

### LLC Structure and Processes

- All staff/faculty are involved (Faculty, staff, Community Assistants (CAs) and regularly meet to ensure everyone is on the same page and able to discuss any issues that are going on
- Tight partnership between Academic Affairs/Student Success and Housing
- Integration of Community Assistants into the Starfish student response system
- Follows best practices
  - [https://www.wm.edu/as/charlescenter/\\_images/sharpe\\_photos/llc-best-practices-model.png](https://www.wm.edu/as/charlescenter/_images/sharpe_photos/llc-best-practices-model.png)
  - [Excerpt from Living-Learning Communities That Work](#)

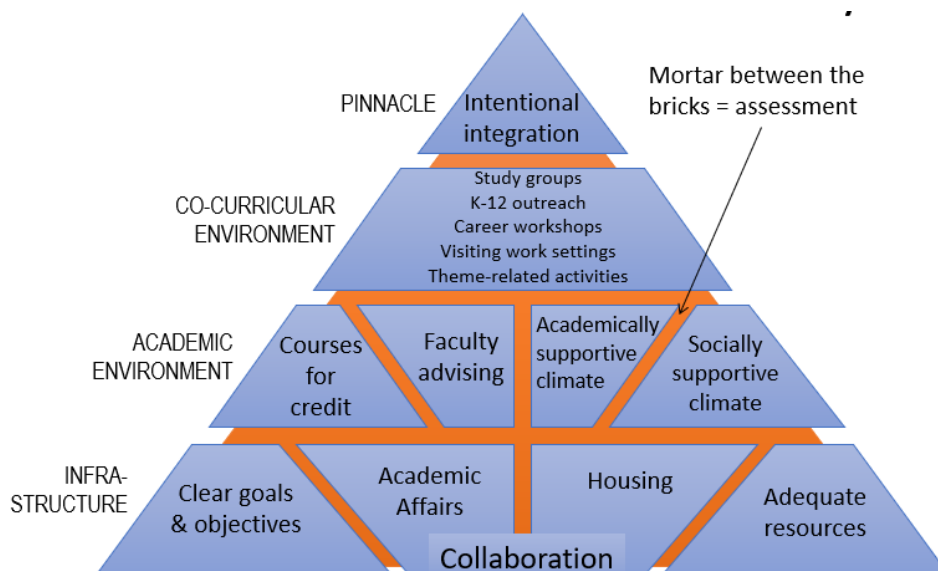


Figure 4: Research by Inkelas et al. (2018) defined the levels of integration for LLCs.

### Current and Future Initiatives

Currently Islander Housing works with the Honors program to facilitate an LLC for Honors students. In addition, Islander Housing operates a substance-free residence hall, provides the option for gender inclusivity throughout campus housing, and offers a “pet zone” in Momentum Village. Islander Housing will continue the Administrator and Faculty in Residence program with plans to grow in the future.

There are three new residential communities being offered fall 2022. Primarily Miramar is being turned into a mostly FTIC living community. Within Miramar will be offered the Nursing and Health Science LLC. There will also be an Outdoor Experience Themed Community launching in the fall. Future expansion goals include an engineering and computer science LLC, a first-generation student LLC, and affinity housing for male students of color.

### First-Year Student Population in Housing

TAMU-CC has two distinct populations of first year students: those who live on campus and those who live in the community – either in off-campus housing or at home. On campus, we have approximately 1300 students, 815 at Miramar and 450 at Momentum. Due to the cost, the on-campus population tends to skew toward the more affluent students, including PSA students, most of whom are S&E students.

<b>Table 2: On-Campus Housing – Fall 2022</b>		
Undeclared	290	Includes PSA; 181 PSA of these are CSE
CSE	350	222 are BIOL/BIMS
NURS	161	

The largest groups of first-year students in housing are College of Science & Engineering students – mostly Biology and BIMS, when including the PSA CSE majors, equals 531 total. The next largest group is pre-Nursing students at 161. Less than 50 of the first-year students are in Engineering majors (this may be skewed due to entrance requirements). Nursing is already working with Islander Housing to pilot a major-based Living Learning Community that would supplement their major-based learning community.

The on-campus community is the population for whom we can build Living Learning Communities (although some campuses encourage non-residents to join in programming provided for LLC participants). LLCs should improve the experience of on-campus housing, encouraging first-year students to live on campus, which will contribute to their success. In addition, LLCs help create connections and a sense of belonging, and decrease transfer after the first year.

### Challenges for LLC Development

1. Resources: Given challenges in enrollment and occupancy there are limited financial and human resources. Creating and facilitating effective LLCs requires strong institutional support. The Michigan WISE program employs a full and part-time director and 5 RAs. It

requires living space and weekly activities. No details about the operating budget were included.

2. The current CA staff: Student ratio is not ideal for a large expansion of academic residential engagement (roughly 75-100 residents per CA). Funding is also lacking.
3. Current professional staffing structure
4. Lack of classrooms or common spaces (for students, programming, etc.)
5. Enrollment and occupancy
6. Lack of buy-in

### **LLC Considerations**

1. We need to develop learning outcomes
2. An LLC model would need to supplement the general model as we would not be able to require first-year students to participate in LLCs.
3. Academic LLCs would be opt-in for residents.
4. LLCs are separate from Affinity/Themed housing and would not need to be part of this discussion as they are more social in nature
5. We think that there needs to be a separate and more focused planning period (past January) to effectively create a new FY learning community model.
6. Collaborate with Academic Affairs to pre-register students

### **Affinity Group Interventions**

There are efforts also to support affinity groups. SEAS is doing gap analyses and looking at building infrastructure. It is too early to know what their goals are or what programs they want to develop. Any intervention focused on an affinity group faces the challenges of recruitment and enrollment. Marketing must be “authentic,” as one presenter from the NLLC conference emphasized, because there is a risk of stigmatizing or stereotyping groups in badly designed materials. Interventions must be developed and piloted carefully.

In terms of providing social connections and a sense of belonging, and engagement for identity-focused groups, SEAS recommends we use the student organizations already in place to serve that function. Student organizations are the best way to connect folks without building new programs, making curricular demands, or having required schedules. For example, Org Fest is held at the beginning of the Fall and is a great opportunity to connect students with orgs. I-Engage could be used more to find opportunities.

### **Male Students of Color**

TAMU-CC has recently joined the [Texas Education Consortium for Male Students of Color](#). The goal of the Consortium is to improve “educational outcomes for Latino and African American male student by connecting partners across educational sector... to [implement and sustain] effective research-based policies, programs, and practices.” While TAMU-CC's involvement in the Consortium is in the early stages, the university will be hosting the spring 2022 Consortium Institute on February 11, 2022.

### **Esports Group**

The affinity group discussed ideas for theme based FYS/LCs and considered the esports theme as an option. The esports club requested a practice computer lab, with extended hours, for gaming and other functions, like late night studying and group work. They were mostly told to use the Breakers space in SEAS (UC). They would need 10 gaming ready computers, capable of the necessary video processing.

### **PSA to PS Stay**

If we want to convince PSA students to stay at TAMU-CC (about 50% do stay), they need to become connected, to fit in and like it here, and feel fulfilled. The beach location is a great advantage in this work. If we can give them a sense of loss in leaving friends or faculty, or to miss out on programs or opportunities that exist here, we may convince them to change their path. We have a unique experience and story to tell, and we must tell it. Students will have a more personalized connection with faculty and less competition for on-campus research positions.

### **Learning Community, FYS, and Intervention Process and Assessment**

The various learning community programs and collaborations should be organized by a committee or council that crosses divisions to ensure success. SEAS controls much of the programming and funding related to activities and programs related to co-curricular activities, including housing. Academic Affairs and the colleges oversee the development and assessment of courses, faculty, and curriculum.

DINS would be an appropriate department to manage the creation (proposal, review, and approval steps), management, assessment, and closure of learning communities. The Student Success Council might be a secondary body to ensure inter-division collaboration. Otherwise, a Learning Communities Council is recommended to organize and ensure continued development and improvement of these initiatives, including those beyond the first year.

DINS will continue to be the academic home for first-year seminars and possibly other courses being offered for first-year students, as they are developed.

### **FYS Model Change Implementation**

We will need to provide support for course redesign and development for FYS and learning communities. It is recommended that summer stipends be provided to faculty to do this. We can offer the Major-based and College Success FYS models by restricting enrollments in FYS sections by college/major, using co-requisites to connect to lectures to FYS, and by creating coordinated course blocks that allow students to take the appropriate required major specific or TSI courses. Notes in SAIL and training for advisors and peer mentors can provide guidance/explanation.



## Appendix A: References

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## Appendix B: Fall 2021 FY Students by Housing Status

### Fall 2021 UNIV 1101 Students by Housing Status (n=1,903)

On-Campus: 1,267/1,903 = 66.6%

Off-Campus: 636/1,903 = 33.4%

Major	Miramar	Momentum	On-Campus	Off-Campus	TOTAL
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>815</b>	<b>452</b>	<b>1267</b>	<b>636</b>	<b>1903</b>
UNDC	206	84	290	43	333
NURS	93	68	161	137	298
BIOL	87	50	137	23	160
BIMS	41	44	85	54	139
PSYC	41	25	66	30	96
KINE	33	22	55	40	95
BUSI	37	14	51	30	81
ESCI	34	9	43	6	49
ELEM	18	15	33	19	52
COSC	23	8	31	42	73
CRIJ	16	14	30	26	56
MEEN	16	9	25	16	41
MKTG	10	13	23	17	40
THEA	15	8	23	2	25
MGMT	11	7	18	11	29
CEEN	7	8	15	8	23
ACCT	12	2	14	10	24
FINA	10	4	14	10	24
COMS	9	3	12	3	15
HCAM	6	5	11	11	22
MEDA	6	4	10	7	17
MUSI	7	3	10	3	13
GRDS	8	1	9	7	16
SPMG	8	1	9	4	13
HIST	4	3	7	6	13
PREL	6	1	7	5	12
PREM	5	2	7	7	14
ARTS	2	4	6	12	18
ATSC	3	3	6	1	7
EEEN	5	1	6	4	10
GISC	4	2	6		6
MCET	3	3	6	6	12

GEOL	3	2	5		5
PRCE	4	1	5	3	8
SOCI	4	1	5	2	7
POLS	1	3	4	4	8
ECOB	2	1	3	4	7
ENGL	1	2	3	3	6
MISY	2	1	3	3	6
PHYS	3		3	5	8
CHEM	2		2	4	6
CLSC	2		2	3	5
COMM	1	1	2	1	3
MATH	2		2	2	4
PHIL	1		1		1
PRBP	1		1		1
MKRE			0	1	1
PRID			0	1	1

## Appendix C: Other Campuses

### LC/LLC Program Models

- [Iowa State University LCs \(Organizational Chart\)](#)
- [Cabrini University LCs](#)
- [UT-Dallas](#)
- [Kansas State University](#)
- [University of North Carolina Greensboro](#)
- [University of Mississippi](#)

The LLC subcommittee found that when reviewing comparable institutions (per Planning and Institutional Research) except for one institution, TAMU-CC lags far behind when it comes to residential community development. Below is a listing of TAMU-CC comps with links to their respective LLC programs.

### LLCs at TAMU-CC Comparable Institutions

- [Florida Gulf Coast University](#)
- [Middle Tennessee State University](#)
- [Morgan State University](#)
- [North Carolina A&T University](#)
- Tennessee State University (unable to locate current LLC information)
- [Texas State University](#)
- [UT-San Antonio](#)
- [The University of West Florida](#)
- [University of Arkansas at Little Rock](#)
- [University of Louisiana at Lafayette](#)
- [University of Massachusetts-Boston](#)
- [University of Missouri-St. Louis](#)
- [University of North Carolina at Charlotte](#)
- [University of South Alabama](#)
- [University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee](#)

## **Appendix D: First Year Learning Communities Task Force Charge**

**Co-chairs:** Dr. Susan Murphy, Associate Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Professor of English  
Martha Simcik, M.P.A., Senior Academic Advisor, Science and Engineering Advising Center

### **Committee Members:**

Career and Professional Development: Leslie Mills, Director, Career & Professional Development

College of Business: Dr. Brian Tietje, Dean

College of Education: Dr. Ashley Voggt, Assistant Professor Special Education

College of Nursing: Ms. Johanna Dubose, Program Coordinator

College of Science and Engineering: Judy Metcalf, Professional Assistant Professor

Faculty Representative: Dr. David Gurney, Department Chair and Associate Professor, Communication and Media Studies

Faculty Representative: Dr. Alexey Sadovski, Department Chair and Professor, Mathematics and Statistics

First-Year Learning Communities Program: Dr. Rita Sperry, Interim Chair and Professional Senior Professor, Department of Interdisciplinary Studies, and Coordinator, First-Year Learning Communities Program

First-Year Learning Communities Program: Sean Britt, Professional Assistant Professor

Recruiting: Rene Zamora, Assistant Director, Recruitment and Admissions

Student Engagement and Success: Adrian Rodriguez, Vice Present

Student Engagement and Success: Amanda Morales, Director of Housing

Student Government Association: William Whitworth, President

Student Success: Dr. Jerel Benton, Interim Associate Vice President of Student Success and Special Assistant to the Provost

### **Background**

Numerous studies (Inkelas et al. 2007, Brower & Inkelas 2010, Sprowles et al. 2019, and Vogel 2020) have indicated that learning communities can improve retention rates and academic achievement for all students, and particularly for first generation, minority students and women in the sciences and engineering. Consequently, a university-wide task force has been formed to develop and present to the campus community a report on transforming the First Year Learning Communities Program (FYLCP). Having multiple learning communities would allow students to explore different offerings and choose one that best fits their needs and interests.

Definition: A learning community (LC) is a curricular program intended to enhance student success (learning, development, retention and persistence). An LC brings faculty, students, and staff together in a focused academic community organized around a thematic central thread that is intellectually attractive to students, faculty and other members of the community. An LC requires academic credit bearing courses that are related to the organizing theme and relevant for the student population for whom the LC is intended. LCs intentionally encourage integration of learning across courses and multiple areas of knowledge/disciplines. They also connect

curricular and co-curricular learning in substantive ways designed to enhance both. An LC is led by a faculty member or a team of faculty and staff that work to develop close supportive relationships and collaboration among the members of the LC. A Learning Community may be centered in a residential setting, and as such, become a Living-Learning Community (LLC) where engaged faculty, staff and students maintain an enhanced co-curricular and social program.

### **Charge**

Dean of the College of Liberal Arts assembles a First Year Learning Communities Task Force to develop and present to the campus community a report on transforming the current communities program. In completing this charge, the Dean should assemble a task force that widely represents various campus stakeholders.

The task force report will serve as a resource and guide for the future development of LCs and LLCs at TAMU-CC.

The report should include an analysis of a range of models and their varying impact on: student experiences; student learning; serving residential and non-residential students; campus resources (e.g., space, equipment, personnel time—faculty and staff); campus culture; and opportunities for partnerships across divisions of the university.

The report should consider and include examples of different types of LCs and LLCs (e.g., theme-based, affinity group-based, major-based, etc.) and duration of LLCs (e.g., short-term, those that last for a semester; and long-term examples of those that are more enduring).

The report should consider and include examples of best LC and LLC practices for our current student profile, with particular attention to our first gen and other underrepresented student populations.

The report should consider and include the adoption of a flexible first-year seminar model in addition to LLCs.

The task force should recommend general procedures or best practices for creation (proposal, review, and approval steps), assessment, and closure.

At the end of its work, the task force should submit a formal report to the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts in early January 2022 as well as prepare and deliver a formal presentation to the campus community by late January 2022.

Minutes of meetings should be submitted to the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts.