

LIVING LEARNING COMMUNITIES: FACULTY AND
RESIDENCE LIFE PERSPECTIVES

By

KARI DAWSON

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Chair

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Abstract

By Kari Dawson, M. A.
Washington State University
May 2007

Chair: Kelly Ward

Faculty and staff from academic affairs and residence life at a large Pacific Northwest land-grant institution developed a living-learning (LLC) program entitled Freshman Focus in 2005. The purpose of this program is to improve academic performance and to foster a learning environment outside of the classroom where faculty and students could engage in informal interactions. This program has been active for the past two fall semesters with plans to continue. The purpose of this study was to develop a fuller understanding of the respective roles that academic affairs and student affairs play in regards to living-learning communities. Results of this study provide recommendations for faculty and residence life staff on ways to improve LLC collaboration and increase faculty engagement.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to Jen who has provided me support, both emotionally and mentally. You have given me the courage to succeed, supporting my efforts each step of the way. Your patience, encouragement, and confidence in me are what got me through this process.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

For the past four years I have had the opportunity to work for two different state institutions. The first was a small regional, comprehensive school in the Midwest that housed approximately 2,400 students on campus and the second was a very large research institution in the Pacific Northwest with approximately 4,200 students living on campus. Despite the differences in institutional type, they have one thing in common: both universities were in the processes of establishing living-learning communities.

Working with the development and implementation of these programs I have always sat on the side of student affairs. Even though I had a dual role as an educator and practitioner, I was not a faculty member. I did not come from academia, nor did I understand fully what the faculty role entailed. As time went on I began to notice a trend. I was not the only one who did not completely understand the faculty perspective. This posed a problem when it came to collaboration on the development of living-learning communities. Even though academic affairs and student affairs staff shared a common goal of providing education both in and out of the classroom, we did not know how to work with one another due to the lack of understanding of each others' world.

Noticing the lack of communication between the two cultures, and an appearance of disinterest from faculty, I wanted to know what residence life staff could do to bridge the gap between academic affairs and student affairs to improve the level of collaboration and success in living-learning communities. This interest is not unique to me. As more campuses create LLCs it is important to more fully understand the role that faculty play to create related experiences.

Given my interest and professional experience of the “living” part of living-learning communities in particular I want to know how residence life can engage faculty participation in the residence halls.

My own personal understanding of living and learning parallel some larger issues in higher education. Recent research about student engagement (Kuh, et al., 2005) calls for holistic perspectives on learning and development (Braskamp, et al., 2006) and has prompted campuses to think more expansively about living and learning. Although not an exclusively new concept, the call to create learning communities has campuses thinking about the relationships between different members of the campus community and the roles they play in study learning and development.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to develop a fuller understanding of the respective roles that academic affairs and student affairs play in regard to living-learning communities. This study looks at the overlap between living and learning, paying particular attention to faculty perspectives in participation in LLCs.

In conclusion to this study, findings provide recommendations to residence life and the division of student affairs on ways collaboration can improve between the two divisions, specifically the faculty involved. With improved collaboration there is the opportunity for informal faculty-student interactions to take place. This is significant to both academic affairs and student affairs due to the nation wide trend that is moving towards the development and implementation of living-learning communities to increase student success. Collaboration between members of student affairs and academic affairs is vital if LLC initiatives are to be

valuable and successful. Without full participation from academic affairs and student affairs campuses will fail to learn how to work together and not serving students holistically.

Guiding Research Questions

This study addresses the following questions: How do academic affairs (faculty) and residence life staff define engagement in living-learning communities? What role do faculty and residence life play in living-learning communities? What do faculty perceive to be the role of residence life? What does residence life staff perceive to be the role of faculty? What role does residence life play in increasing faculty engagement in the residence halls?

Method

This qualitative study was conducted at a large Pacific Northwest land-grant institution. Participants in this study include five full-time faculty members who taught one or more Freshman Focus (a LLC) courses, and five Residence Life staff who worked in the residence halls with Freshman Focus programming initiatives. Formal in-depth interviews were used to gather information. Two texts were primarily utilized to inform with the development of the methodology for this study. Rubin and Rubin (2005) and Bogdan and Biklen (2007) were referred to for information on conducting in-depth interviews, formulating interview questions, transcription, coding and data analysis.

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) describe qualitative research as having five key features that may be present to varying degrees within a research project. These five features include being naturalistic, providing descriptive data, being concerned with process rather than simply the outcomes, being inductive, and containing meaning. This study employs in-depth qualitative interviewing techniques utilizing a responsive interviewing model. Qualitative research results in learning about the topic and individuals being researched, providing a carefully written analysis

of what has been learned. Responsive interviewing is “an approach that allows a variety of styles yet incorporates what is standard in the field” of qualitative research (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 15). Through qualitative responsive interviews, interviewees were able to provide examples or diverse experiences, allowing the researcher to have a flexible interview design while gaining increased understanding. As described in Rubin and Rubin (2005) the goal of responsive interviewing “is to generate depth of understanding, rather than breadth” (p. 30). Participants in this study were kept confidential and pseudonyms used.

The goal of this study is to provide greater understanding of collaboration of student affairs and academic affairs and how that collaboration manifests the shared efforts towards greater student learning and development. The next chapter provides an overview of the literature used to ground and situate the study followed by an in-depth description of the methods used to carry out the study. Chapter Four presents the findings of the study and Chapter Five the conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review aims to provide historical context surrounding the role of faculty involvement in student life, how the faculty role has evolved, importance of collaboration between academic affairs and student affairs, and an overview of living-learning communities. The purpose of this review of literature is to provide context surrounding the importance of informal student-faculty interactions and how residence life can increase faculty interactions in living-learning communities to foster learning and student development.

Historical View of the Faculty Role and Involvement in Student Life

Throughout history, colleges and universities have evolved in the services provided to students. What was once a training ground for clergy, teachers, or technical schools for military personnel, college campuses have adopted a holistic view on student education. This section outlines the role of faculty and how it has developed from the Colonial Period to current day as a way to more fully understand the role of faculty in student development and learning.

The Colonial period (1637-1770) was a time of prestige and status focused on preparing students for public service. Current day conceptions of student development, faculty-student interactions, and matriculation lacked during this time. According to Thelin (2004), “colonial college life was characterized by perpetual tensions between students and faculty” (p. 21). Student complaints consisted of inadequate dining facilities, lack of extracurricular activities and a desire for increased autonomy. Faculty frequently were hired for their religious backgrounds, rather than their academic expertise, often times serving in loco parentis, leaving little separation in their role as a teacher and disciplinarian. The faculty role was difficult to define during this time period. According to Ward (2003), colonial colleges struggled with the birth of the teaching

profession as tutors were “hired for their religious commitment rather than their scholarly or teaching abilities” (p. 19). The result was inexperienced faculty whose tenure was short yet closely tied to student life. Tutors not only taught the courses, but also spent entire days with students. Often times these tutors shared living quarters with the student, extending learning into the students living environment.

The next period in history can be identified as that of the Denominational Colleges dating from 1770-1860. Denominational colleges are those colleges affiliated with religious denominations and are the forerunners of today’s liberal arts colleges. As these campuses expanded, the movement toward professionalization of faculty became visible. As previously mentioned, most colonial college faculty were recent graduates that played the role of tutors, with very few professors serving in academia. This balance was reversed in the denominational college period, as the number of professional faculty increased and began to outnumber tutors. With this change, the role of teaching began to evolve into a more formal role. “It was here that the shift from a largely itinerant and inexperienced workforce gave way to the beginning of the academic career as a profession” (Ward, 2003, p. 22).

The trend of college campus expansion continued to grow and the long-term career of professorship became more legitimate. American higher education began to research other countries academic systems, attempting to improve current practices. By mid-century, Americans were studying Germanic ideals and universities, bringing ideas back to the United States giving way to the emergence of the Residential University (1860-1945). According to Ward (2003) the German model focused on research and an elective system, providing students with the autonomy they asked for during the Colonial period. The elective system also provided professors the opportunity to explore specializations, further lending to their expertise in

research. This shift marks the beginning of the modern university. German contributions to current American systems added to the legitimization of the role of faculty.

State and federal funding was instituted with the passing of the Morrill Act in 1862. This Act was commonly referred to as the Land Grant College Act (Thelin, 2004; Ward, 2003). Through the Act states were awarded federal land, which in turn could be sold for profit. The profits would then be applied towards education in agriculture, mechanical arts, as well as liberal arts. With the passing of this Act, federally supported institutions grew in size. This boom in growth continued changing trends in the role of faculty. Continued emphasis was placed on research, competing with the faculty role of teaching.

Education continued to transform. “Faculty of the early research university had broken away from the liberal arts college model, which was focused almost exclusively on students and teaching” (Ward, 2003, p. 32). With the emphasis placed on research, faculty continued to move away from teaching. The role of research increased as the prime contributor to a faculty member’s professional status (Ward, 2003). Teaching was no longer at the forefront of the faculty member’s role in these newly formed land grant and state universities. The Morrill Act pledged the expertise of the university to meet the needs of the land grant institutions of their respective states. This clearly established the service role of faculty creating a triad of responsibility: teaching, research and service.

The role of faculty evolved with the emergence of the research university. Effort and attention focused more on research, resulting in faculty spending much of their time out of the classroom, placing diminished emphasis on student learning and teaching both in and outside of the classroom. Service, which was once geared toward the student, had also evolved and transitioned away from the student. According to Thelin (2004) educational reformers were

concerned with the disconnect between students and their studies. Students appeared bored with the rote memorization and longed for a challenge in the classroom. “For many undergraduates, compliance with the formal curriculum was merely the price of admission into ‘college life’” (Thelin, 2004, p. 65). Students continued to be dissatisfied with on-campus housing and dining arrangements, forcing them to move off campus into private housing where administration could no longer enforce policy. Service was no longer a direct benefit to the students, but rather a focus towards academic initiatives, political and governmental interest.

Education began to transition once again. The university maintained its role as a research institution educating both the elite and the common public. Historians referenced this period as the “golden age,” marked by “prosperity, prestige, and popularity” (Thelin, 2004, p. 260). The period of Mass Education, considered 1945 to 1975, was a result of the increased enrollment, growth in financial support and diversification of institutional type. According to Thelin (2004) education altered in two major ways. The first alteration was the movement to provide mass access to higher education for students. The second was increased “capacity to add advanced programs, from the undergraduate level on up through the professional schools and doctoral programs” (Thelin, 2004, p. 260). At the same time the junior colleges appeared and were seen as the “new, distinctive American institution” (Thelin, 2004, p. 260). Vocational institutes and trades schools, both of which were for-profit sectors, emerged and continued to grow. Ironically, as mass education began to flourish and open its doors to the public, increased tensions and pressure were put on faculty as their roles became more restrictive and hierarchical. Faculty focused much of their attention on research, discarding the emphasis that was one placed on teaching.

Research continued to be a major emphasis for the federal government as well as college and universities. “Science was seen as the endless frontier” (Thelin, 2004, p. 271). “The watchword was that ‘Big Science’ was ‘Best Science,’ and this meant a system of competitive grants awarded to university scientist who submitted proposals and were then selected by peer review to carry out government projects” (Thelin, 2004, p. 271). Such partnerships forced universities to focus on the needs of the federal government rather resulting in less attention and support being provided to esoteric research (Ward, 2003).

The mid 1940s marked the emergence of the academic profession by the professionalization and specialization of faculty experts. With the increased expansion and diversification of the higher education system, the number of academic careers increased. As a result, there was an increase in faculty visibility, as well as an increase in salaries. Higher education continued to expand and diversify, creating university hierarchy. Recognition was given to those in the hard sciences versus the soft. The same went for those working at universities versus community colleges. “These hierarchies would lead to increased tensions between teaching, research, and service and the relative importance of each, depending on the institutional type and discipline” (Ward, 2003, p. 39). Teaching, research, and service became a balancing act, often resulting in increased value placed on research over teaching.

Hierarchies continued to cause stress on campuses nation wide, resulting in the mass education era as one of extremes. Campuses became more bureaucratic, placing an increased emphasis on the difference in perspective in upper level administration and faculty roles (Ward, 2003). Despite the fact that faculty continued to be rewarded for their specialization and contributions to society, recognition towards teaching lacked especially at research institutions to pull farther and farther away.

Diversification and expansion of higher education contributed to overall stress and confusion over the roles of faculty members. According to Thelin (2004), “base salaries and teaching loads became increasingly incidental for those departments that were positioned to compete successfully for substantial federal research grants” (p. 278). This often times meant that the rich got richer, and many research projects were renewable. Despite the fact that many young faculty members were hired to teach, evaluation and merit was based on their research. This contrasted what teachers were hired for during World War II, a time when faculty were promoted for their role as a teacher. This change caused tension between the relationship of what it meant to be a teacher and what it meant to be a researcher. Even though there was emphasis put on teaching, faculty were rewarded for research over teaching. As a result the professoriate became more focused on research, since the attention towards promotion and tenure was in this area—a phenomenon familiar today.

At the start of the Contemporary Era, (1975 to today) the expansion of higher education started to diminish. Criticisms and challenges continued to appear due to the high profile of higher education. The research climate was the major force in the growth of higher education during the mass education period, but this growth has led to much criticism. Research was part of the driving force in securing increased revenue and funding for individual and departmental scholars. With decreased funding from the federal government, many institutions turned to external sources for additional funding. Research helped fill some of the gaps in government funding, but with the decrease in government funding, universities also turned to increase tuition. Even with the rising cost of tuition, enrollment levels maintained an all time high. Part of the increase in tuition was the updating of classrooms, which included increased technology. This technology also continued the trend of accessible education.

The 1970s saw a new cohort of faculty to higher education that were research oriented and more truly teacher-scholars. This diversity of faculty assisted universities during budget crises, as more part-time and adjunct faculty were hired. In addition to diversification, faculty faced many strains. With the increased emphasis placed on research, faculty struggled with their role on all levels. With increased demands for research and publication for tenure, faculty were pulled from their traditional teaching roles. One of the major preconceptions within the academic profession today is the balance of teaching, research, and service (Ward, 2003).

As the role of higher education has evolved over time, so has the role of faculty. Historically viewed as teacher, tutor, mentor and often times pseudo parent, the role of faculty has emerged into that of scholar researcher. Dependent on institutional type, the balance between teaching, research and service looks different. However, regardless of institutional type faculty are rewarded disproportionately for research (Ward, 2003). The role of faculty did not evolve in a vacuum. As the historical overview provided here illustrates, many societal forces shaped the faculty role (e.g. federal support of higher education). At the same time there were many internal factors that shaped and influence how faculty life evolved, including the growth and development of the student affairs function.

Evolution of Student Affairs

Residential facilities in colonial college were built to bring faculty and students closer together. During the colonial period the college environment was very intimate with tutors not only teaching classes, but spending most of their time with the students, even sharing living quarters (Ward, 2003). The residence halls made it possible for faculty to play a broad educational role, exercising supervision and parental concern for the well being of the whole student. During this period, faculty were seen as strict, parental and authoritarian.

By mid nineteenth century a more relaxed view emerged as the concept of extracurricular activities developed. This changed focused on the development of the whole student—mind, personality and body. During this time there was increased change on the role of faculty and what was expected of them. With an increase in student enrollment, colleges and universities began to shift their focus. Athletic programs and student organizations began to emerge. Faculty had a difficult time accepting this change. Faculty felt “their responsibility related only to the training of the students mind. They had little interest in how students spent their time outside of the classroom” (Nuss, 1996, p. 26).

Change away from the parental role diminished faculty interest in the residence halls, and reduced their involvement in student discipline. The faculty role outside of the classroom started to fade way to the growth and development of student affairs. By the twentieth century, the role of faculty in student personnel matters changed from total involvement to detachment. Student affairs had been slowly evolving for years due to the changes in faculty roles and extracurricular activities and continued to grow with the creation of professional organizations, continued research and state and federal funding.

The role of the student affairs has continued to evolve over time with major emphasis put on the development of the whole student and to support the academic mission. Historically the division of student affairs was developed to assist in the development of the student, helping foster their personal and professional growth outside of the classroom. The creation of student personnel services was not started to shy faculty away from students but rather to assist. This is one reason that collaboration between faculty and residence life is so significant. “Colleges and universities recognized that student’s academic performance was affected in important ways by his or her surroundings—particularly housing. Student residence halls were viewed as an

effective way to reintegrate the curriculum and extracurricular activities” (Nuss, 1996, p. 32).

Knowing that a student's housing is so important, and residence halls can reintegrate curriculum fostering the academic mission, why is it then that these two entities (curriculum and residence life) are not working closely together?

Importance of Faculty-Student Interactions

“Meaningful interactions between students and their teachers are essential to high-quality learning experiences” (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt & Associates, 2005, p. 207). In order for a student to flourish, learning requires a combination of factors in order for a student to be successful. A great portion of student's success lies within personal responsibility for one's own education. According to Pearson and Bowman (2000), “students learning and personal growth are directly correlated to the degree to which they invest time and energy in the learning process, both in and out of the classroom” (p. 29). Faculty-student interactions also lead to student success. Kuh et al. (2005) indicate faculty members who are available and respond to student's needs results in students pushing “themselves towards academic success because they really felt that faculty cared about them” (p. 208).

If faculty-student interactions and out-of-class learning are so important, where do learning opportunities take place? Out of class learning can take place in a variety of forms. Peer learning, collaborative group learning, participation in co-curricular activities, and engagement with faculty all contribute to student learning and development. Altschuler and Kramnick (1999) want students to realize that learning is not limited to classroom interactions. Learning can take place in a student organization meetings, hall government, residence halls, or having coffee with a peer or faculty member. One of the greatest avenues to extend classroom education is to incorporate learning and curriculum into the residence hall programming model.

According to Kuh et al. (2005) faculty visibility outside of the classroom creates stronger working relationships between the student and faculty member as they get to know one another on a more personal level. Students also spend a substantial amount of time in their residence halls, and opportunities for interaction with peers and faculty, along with involvement in out-of-class activities are abundant. Another reason why residence halls are so influential in the learning process is because students who live on campus tend to be more involved than their off campus peers. “Students in residential learning communities had significantly higher levels of involvement, interaction, integration, and gains in learning and intellectual development than did students in traditional residence halls” (Pike, 1999, p. 269). Student involvement has been directly related to higher student success rates.

Another way to augment student success is to increase the levels of interactions faculty have with students. “Such relationships also make students feel as if they are part of a smaller community within the large university, and they learn firsthand about faculty and their academic interest” (Kuh et al., 2005, p. 212). Pike (1999) also asserts that student learning and intellectual development are influenced by a variety of factors, one being interaction with faculty. One way to contribute to increased faculty-student interaction is by having residence hall staff provide opportunities for faculty to be involved in programming in the residence halls. The interactions that students have with faculty outside of the classroom can foster student development. The quantity and quality of faculty involvement with students is particularly important as it has an effect on student outcomes that is second only to the effect of the student peer group (Pearson & Bowman, 2000).

Student affairs professionals realize the importance of faculty as multifaceted, productive resources that improve the overall quality of undergraduate life by bridging the gap between

curricular and co-curricular experiences (Armstrong, 1999). As a result in lack of communication and understanding between academic affairs and student affairs, the full potential of utilizing faculty outside of the classroom can be hindered. Faculty can be apprehensive to collaborate, fearing dual relationships and a heightened awareness of sexual harassment cases on college campuses. Knowing the benefits of collaboration in regards to student success, how can student affairs professionals overcome some of these obstacles?

Faculty Fears and Concern

Curious as to why faculty would not want to be involved in the development of student success outside of the classroom I started to research the topic of faculty-student informal interactions. I also looked at research on collaboration between student affairs and academic affairs. Three main themes emerged. The first reason faculty fear increased involvement with students was due to fear of dual relationships. The second reason faculty did not collaborate freely was due to university reward systems not recognizing this type of collaboration as service towards tenure. Third, faculty and students affairs have very little understanding toward each other's culture, making collaboration overwhelming and intimidating.

What is a dual relationship? Pearson and Bowman (2000) define dual relationships as engaging in one or more types of relationships in addition to a professional relationship with an individual at a given time. Faculty members worry about dual relationships with students due to the increased awareness of sexual harassment on college campuses. Faculty members have heightened awareness regarding levels of dual relationships and types of contact that is ethically appropriate. This anxiety makes it difficult for faculty members to determine when and where to draw the line with involvement outside of the classroom. At some institutions, faculty are afraid to develop relationships, as it could be perceived as inappropriate. Faculty are also apprehensive

about entering the student's home (i.e. the residence hall). Faculty see their role as an educator and nothing more. Altschuler and Kramnick (1999) indicate how faculty are cautious about living-learning communities for fear they would have to supervise or parent the student. Faculty members also feel they are unwilling and unqualified to be moral tutors, let alone moral police in undergraduate residence halls.

Providing faculty with training and clear expectations can eliminate some of the above mentioned reservations. Pearson and Bowman (2000) suggest that one way to alleviate faculty anxiety is to maintain frequent communication, and provide opportunities to exchange information with other faculty and or student affairs professionals participating in the program. This increased level of communication could help faculty understand their role within the living-learning community, as well as what type of relationships are appropriate and expected.

According to Philpott and Strange (2003), there is an apparent disconnect and lack of understanding between faculty and student affairs professionals. This misunderstanding has led to differing expectations of one another, resulting in a differentiation of roles. In regards to this disconnect and lack of understanding, collaboration between the two fields has to be re-introduced and a re-acquaintance of each other's campus cultures to help increase understanding of each others roles. Philpott and Strange (2003) mention that researchers learned that faculty and student affairs do not have a clear understanding of each other's role on campus, resulting in independent work towards this project rather than a collaborative effort.

What is the benefit for collaboration amongst faculty and student affairs? Student affairs are able to educate faculty on student life, in ways faculty were unable to previously understand. Collaboration between faculty and students affairs continues to help students grow and develop. Both faculty and student affairs need to rely on one another in order to be successful in providing

a holistic approach to student learning. The lack of understanding that faculty and residence life have towards each sub-culture has hindered collaborative efforts in regards to student learning and development outside of the classroom.

Living-Learning Communities

Student affairs professionals are dedicated to providing an environment that fosters student development and learning in a variety of settings. Professionals look for an assortment of activities that will engage and encourage students to become actively involved in the education process, with the hope that students make the connection between living and learning, while promoting student success. According to the Student Learning Imperative (ACPA, 1996), “students benefit from many and varied experiences during college and learning and personal development are cumulative, mutually shaping processes that occur over an extended period of time in many different settings. The more students are involved outside of the classroom, the more they gain” (p. 120). One way this goal can be accomplished is with the attempt to provide “seamless” services through the collaboration of faculty and students affairs staff in the creation and delivery of living-learning communities.

The idea of living-learning communities is not a new concept. According to MacGregor, Tinto, and Lindblad (2000), examples of learning communities date back to the 1920s. In the past 15 years the interest in expanding these programs has grown. The current wave of interest in learning communities is not just a fad, but rather a deeper look into the benefits of small group learning which are commonly found in learning communities (Cross, 1998). With the evolution of the field of higher education and the development of the student affairs profession, living-learning communities have increased on a multitude of campuses. Living-learning communities are evidence of the attempt to move more to a collaborative learning environment where faculty,

student affairs professionals and students can interact. Learning has outgrown the confines of classroom walls and has worked its way into broader aspects of the student's life, in such places as the residence halls.

Learning communities have two common elements; collaborative learning and connected learning. Collaborative learning comes from the learning community's enrollment of the same student in several common courses, thereby increasing the likelihood of an integrated social and academic experience. Connected learning comes from the shared courses links around a theme or single large topic (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). For example, at Washington State University, students participate in collaborative learning with their enrollment in two common classes with other students who live on the same floor. Faculty in these LLCs are encouraged to collaborate on curriculum development and bridge their syllabi. Faculty are also encouraged to work with residential life staff to program or teach inside of the residence halls to engage student in informal interactions.

What is the importance of these living-learning communities? Kuh et al. (2005) indicates, "living and learning with other students and faculty create a community based on shared intellectual experiences and leavened by social interactions outside of the class. As a result, students are more actively involved with the course material than if they simply attended class" (p. 198). Academic and social connections made within the first year of college promote student success (Banta & Kuh, 1998). Learning communities promote student connections and out-of-class learning. The impact that learning communities have on students include: students create academic support groups that extend outside of the classroom, student engagement increases inside the classroom making connections with learning outside of class, and outside of class and participation in learning communities enhances the quality of student learning (Kuh et al., 2005,

Tinto, 2000). There is also the opportunity for increased interactions with faculty members outside of the classroom that enhance students learning and persistence towards maturation (Tinto, 2000). There is also evidence that participation in learning communities, along with student contact with faculty members outside of the classroom, consistently promotes student persistence into the second semester, educational aspirations, and degree completion (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

An important concept of student success is increased faculty-student interactions outside of the classroom by student and faculty participation in living-learning communities. In their meta analysis of related literature, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005), found research that suggest, “student-faculty interactions that tend to reinforce or extend the intellectual ethos of the classroom or that focus on issues of student development can have positive implications for general cognitive development during college” (p. 189). This research supports the call for increased collaboration with faculty in living-learning communities. As one student states, “I think some of my best experiences were outside of the classroom, where I could take what I learned in the classroom and apply it” (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 189). Whose responsibility is it to engage faculty in living-learning communities? Research shows that the both faculty and student affairs staff have mutual responsibility to work together to enhance student learning, leading to the success of living-learning communities (Banta & Kuh, 1998; Komives et al., 1996; Kuh et al., 2005).

Summary

Looking at current research regarding faculty roles in higher education, the importance of collaboration between academic affairs and student affairs, and living-learning communities, it is important for faculty and students to connect outside of the classroom. It is also clear that

“faculty and student affairs professionals play equally important roles in supporting students holistic development in the cocurricular environment” (Braskamp, Trautvetter, & Ward, 2006, p. 130). With the current trend focused on living-learning communities, there are a vast array of opportunities for faculty to be engaged and collaborate with student affairs. If there are so many opportunities why is collaboration so difficult? Historically, American higher education illustrates forced collaboration between faculty and other college constituents, such as residence life, has endured an ‘on-again, off-again relationship since the mid-nineteenth century (Philpott & Strange, 2003, p. 77). In the present day, faculty and student affairs have paid little attention on how to collaborate on common educational goals. Despite the fact that these two entities both serve students, they sometimes operate in two different worlds. “Collaboration between academic affairs and students affairs professionals is more likely to be productive when both groups have a common language about learning and personal development” (Banta & Kuh, 1998, p. 44).

This study attempts to better understand the roles of faculty and residence life as members of student affairs, regarding collaboration and engagement in living-learning communities through the study design described next.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Current research is clear that faculty and student interactions are important to student success. Current research also shows that faculty roles sometimes conflict with increased involvement in co-curricular experiences. Fuller understanding of living-learning communities will provide context to faculty and residence life collaboration.

This study attempts to address the following questions: How do academic affairs (faculty) and residence life staff define engagement in living-learning communities? What role do faculty and residence life play in living-learning communities? What do faculty perceive to be the role of residence life? What residence life staff perceive to be the role of faculty? What role does residence life play in increasing faculty engagement in the residence halls?

The methodological framework for this study is qualitative research utilizing formal, in-depth interviews to gain a better understanding of the roles of academic affairs and student affairs in participation in living-learning communities. This study examines how faculty and residence life interact with one another, identifying overlap in living and learning.

Following is an overview of the Freshman Focus program to provide context for deeper understanding of this particular living-learning community used for the purpose of this study. Freshman Focus—a program developed at Washington State University that was implemented the fall of 2005. This program is marked by collaboration between academic affairs and the department of residence life. The goal of Freshman Focus is to promote faculty interaction with students living in the residence halls and assigned to a freshman focus course pairing. First year students in Freshman Focus register for two courses that are linked together and matched with a

residence hall floor. Freshmen Focus cohorts are assigned to the same floor and have two joint general education courses that are taken together with other Freshman Focus students on the same residence hall floor. This program aims to foster academic success in the residence halls by incorporating faculty in residential programming. For example students can learn in the same place that they reside, take two courses in common, and create studious atmospheres. Clearly, success of the program is incumbent upon the joint participation of faculty and residence life staff.

Data Collection

Participants were selected through a process of purposeful sampling. Interviews were conducted with five full-time faculty members and five residence life staff members. The faculty members interviewed for this study have directly taught one course in the Freshman Focus program. Three of the five residence life staff members interviewed were full-time professionals who have supervised student staff members in a Freshman Focused assigned building. The remaining two residence life staff interviews were conducted with student staff members who have directly worked with Freshman Focus programming efforts for the last two years. The participants in this study are current Washington State University faculty and staff members.

Washington State University was chosen as the site for this study due to the newness of the Freshman Focus program as well as a personal interest in developing increased faculty engagement within the Freshman Focus program. In working with the Freshman Focus program as a residence life staff member for the past two years, I have noticed the need for faculty engagement in regards to participation levels with the Freshman Focus program. Residence life serves as a catalyst to engage faculty participation in residential-based learning, as they are

familiar with student life outside of the classroom. Accessibility and time frame were also factors taken into consideration when deciding on the location for this project.

This study relies on interviews with five full-time faculty members who have taught a Freshman Focus course. Three of the five faculty members interviewed were tenured. Faculty were asked to provide information regarding personal demographics as well questions about their individual involvement in the Freshman Focus program. The interview protocol that was used for the faculty interviews was then broken into three main categories: general involvement, student learning, and relationship with residence life. Follow-up questions for each category were then asked. These questions attempted to gather a depth of information regarding faculty experiences when participating in the program, collaboration with other key players in Freshman Focus, rewards for participation, collaboration with residence life, connections with student learning, and suggestions for improvement of the Freshman Focus program.

Similar to the faculty questions, residence life staff members were also asked to answer questions regarding their individual involvement in the Freshman Focus program starting with questions regarding personal demographics. Utilizing similar interview protocol, residence life staff questions were also broken into three main categories: general involvement, student learning, and relationship with faculty members. These questioned attempted to gather a depth of information regarding residence life experience working with the Freshman Focus program, rewards for participations, summary of challenges, collaboration and relationship with faculty, augmentation of student learning, as well as recommendations for improvement of the Freshman Focus program.

Initial contact was made to faculty and residence life staff through purposeful sampling utilizing an electronic memo asking for participation. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were

used to collect data. Interview questions focus on faculty and residence life staff experience with the Freshman Focus program. For complete protocols see Appendices A-D.

Data Analysis

Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. The transcribed interviews were then analyzed by reading and re-reading interview transcripts to become familiar with them, assigning codes to portions of the data, and identifying emerging themes. Emerging themes were checked against the data with the assistance of critical peers, and modified as necessary before being presented as findings. This process of incorporating emerging themes from the data with the initial findings constructed during the study is characteristic of inductive analysis used in qualitative research (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Qualitative research methods were used for the purpose of this study to gain a depth of understanding of both faculty and residence life roles and perceptions. The research questions in this study are not ones that can be answered easily, thus requiring a qualitative method that provides examples, experiences and participant perspective. Utilizing a qualitative method also provides perspective into the processes, problems, and positive associated with the Freshman Focus program. Suggestions for faculty and residence life staff that participate in living-learning communities are provided through the analysis and emergence of themes from the literature review and interviews.

This study maintained accuracy by carefully obtaining, recording and reporting interviewees comments, as well as representing what the interviewees exactly stated, as well as relying on transcriptions versus memory when compiling findings (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Trustworthiness is demonstrated through the accuracy of information presented in the review of literature as well as through the analysis of the in-depth interviews. Detailed and accurate field notes from participant interviews were maintained to provide accurate participant information.

Transparency is demonstrated through the presentation of research methods and findings, providing a clear outline of this project. “Transparency means that a reader of qualitative research report is able to see the process by which the data were collected and analyzed” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 76).

Data analysis was completed utilizing a macro perspective, working for the data that was collected versus working from previous assumptions. Data was then synthesized within individual group analysis moving to data reduction until distinctive themes emerged. Within the faculty interviews four distinct themes became visible with one sub-theme. Out of the residence life interviews four distinct themes emerged. Cross-analyzing the data, four themes appeared to be repetitive from the two groups. These themes were knowledge, communication, logistics and involvement. The findings are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Through inductive analysis of the transcribed interviews from faculty and residence life staff four common themes emerged. The four major themes are: involvement, communication, knowledge, and logistics. Despite the fact these themes share similarities between the two divisions, the interpretation of the themes varied when analyzed more closely. The following is a summary of the findings of each theme.

Involvement

In analyzing the data regarding the reasoning behind faculty participation in the LLC the following was concluded. The over-arching reason why faculty participate in the Freshman Focus program is because they were directed to do so from upper level administration. Faculty were not given a choice in their involvement, which has resulted in resentment and frustration. One faculty member exclaimed when asked about involvement,

NO! I was not [asked]. I was told, which is not the way I would choose to handle it. I think that's a mistake to make faculty feel coerced into this obligation. It wasn't overwhelming but it certainly involved several hours of work...so having no participation in the decision-making was a little frustrating.

Another faculty member stated,

Well you know you cannot just tell college faculty that they are just going to do something. Particularly when it comes to their classes, that is really bad. So everybody was just outraged. So we were not happy campers at all.

The directive to participate has made faculty disgruntled and not eager to participate. In addition to not having a choice in faculty involvement, participants in this study have also indicated that there are no additional rewards or incentives for participation. There is a small stipend for completing a planning and evaluation memo, but currently no other forms of recognition exist. Participants in this study indicate that they have not been formally or informally recognized and this perpetuates the frustration they have towards their participation in a living-learning community.

According to one faculty member regarding departmental support she stated:

As far as I can tell they are unaware and we don't discuss things like that [rewards for participation]. So you are pretty much on your own. That's part of the university culture. The professors by and large, they are on their own. They are in their classrooms and it's their own world.

The additional time spent linking courses, planning programs, and collaborating with other Freshman Focus members is not recognized, resulting in difficulty finding additional time to dedicate to the program.

Lastly, a sub-theme of faculty involvement emerged from the data collected. Faculty continue to have fear in regards to entering the students' domain. Despite the fact numerous faculty believe going into the residence halls is beneficial towards student success, some fear still exists. According to faculty, classroom management has become increasingly more difficult as these students form such tight knit groups. This group identity that the students have developed carries over into the classroom, causing disruption as a result of students' "hyper-bonding".

One faculty member said: So by taking yourself into their turf are you going to lose respect that you build up in the classroom? In some ways it is a barrier.

There is no doubt about it. It is part of the discipline act. It is part of the intellectual challenge that you have with the students. It is part of the power you hold over the students. Whatever you want to call it, it's there.

As a result, faculty expressed that barriers still need to be maintained. The fear that respect will be lost if faculty enter the residence halls is on the forefront of their minds. There is fear of becoming too casual with students will result in a lack of respect for authority. With this lack of respect, faculty articulated that they may have an inability to manage their classroom as a result of this newfound relationship with students. Pearson and Bowman (2000) suggest that one way to alleviate faculty anxiety is to maintain frequent communication and provide opportunities to exchange information with other faculty and or student affairs professionals participating in the program. This increased level of communication could help faculty understand their role within the living-learning community, as well as what type of relationships are appropriate and expected.

Faculty felt very unsupported and under-recognized for their participation in a LLC. Residence life staff did not express the same feelings. The residence life staff interviewed for this study felt that the department of residence life not only encouraged their involvement in the program but also supported their efforts. What did stand out from the residence life interviews was the perception of faculty involvement in the program, which in turn affected their own eagerness to participate. The residence life staff members expressed that faculty involvement often times appeared to be one-sided. Despite that, some faculty seemed eager to learn more regarding the role of residence life, as well as an understanding of the residence life mission and goals, faculty still appeared distant from the program. Perceptions and experience from residence life indicated that the lack of faculty energy and enthusiasm for the program made it difficult for

hall staff to engage faculty in collaborative efforts. It also was indicated that there was not a clear understanding of what each other's role was in regards to the Freshman Focus program. On all too many campuses today the relationship between faculty and residence life "is characterized by infrequent contact, a lack of knowledge and interest on the part of each about the purposes and functions of the other, and frustration" (Philpott & Strange, 2003, p. 78).

Communication

Communication emerged as a common theme of concern on both the side of academic affairs and that of student affairs. Faculty felt there was a lack of communication with other members of the Freshman Focus team. This included a lack of communication with academic peers, as well as communication with residence life. The majority of the communication took place via e-mail, but when communicating with other participants in the living-learning community (e.g. student staff members known as Resident Advisors) there was a negligible response rate. Faculty stated they would like more communication from residence life regarding what opportunities exist for faculty involvement. Faculty also expressed they would like more information regarding student issues that occur in the hall that could potentially carry over into the classroom thus affecting student learning. The break in communication directly relates to the lack of knowledge Freshman Focus faculty have regarding residence life.

Just as faculty expressed the need for increased communication in their interviews, residence life expressed the same sentiment. Residence life indicated that communication was often hit or miss depending on the faculty member, making communication the chief challenge of Freshman Focus. With increased attempts to communicate and no success, residence life staff felt a great deal of frustration. Voice mails and e-mails were often times not returned, and when they were returned it took staff multiple attempts in order to get one response. Resident Advisors

also indicated that they had a fear of contacting faculty due to continuous rejection from previous attempts to connect. One staff member indicated:

The relationship was just vague and getting on the same page was really challenging. I had a lot of RAs (resident advisors) who came in very hesitant to contact faculty themselves. I had a couple of RAs who their last year working with Freshman Focus had a couple of faculty that were fairly rude to them and so were very hesitant and not wanting to contact the faculty themselves so we had to work really hard to encourage the RAs to do that.

Analysis of the data showed the both academic affairs and student affairs struggled with varying methods of communication. This barrier in communication hindered collaborative efforts, lacking in contributions to the students participating in the LLC. The lack of communication may be a consequence of faculty and residence life working in two different sub-cultures (Kuh & Whitt, 1988).

Knowledge

The expressed need for communication from faculty also leads to their lack of understanding and knowledge regarding student affairs. Faculty continuously expressed that they have minimal knowledge of student life outside of the classroom but are eager to learn what goes on in the residence halls. According to the interviewees, faculty do not have a clear understanding of residence life and the role they play in the Freshman Focus program.

I'm really at a disadvantage because I really don't know that much about residence life. Basically you are talking to someone who knows nothing about residence life. What do I not know? There is a breakdown in communication taking place, which we should fix. Faculty should be aware of what else is out

there in the university and how does it impact students instead of just being in our own little classrooms and that is all we do.

The knowledge that faculty would like to acquire includes: hall demographics, hall culture, hall location, programming space, resources for programming, financial availability, and programming opportunities. Faculty expressed that they would also like to know what programming opportunities are available to avoid reinventing the wheel, but rather hit the ground running to make the program more successful. Faculty also indicated that they have no prior experiences in working with residence life and would appreciate any information that residence life staff could offer.

Comparable to faculty comments, residence life also expressed the need for additional information regarding faculty roles and what goes on in the world of academic affairs. The only individuals who seemed to have a clearer understanding of what a living-learning community's role is are those student staff members who have previously participated in a LLC. Student staff members who have participated in the Freshman Focus program prior to being on staff have a clearer understanding of their role and how they could facilitate involvement in the program.

Parallel to faculty thoughts, residence life also indicated that faculty can be difficult to work with because they do not have an understanding of what goes on outside of the classroom. Some information that is currently lacking is faculty knowledge regarding residence hall locations, programming opportunities and resources. Despite faculty members eagerness to learn more with hopes to develop a clearer understanding of student life outside of the classroom communication is still absent. The lack of knowledge regarding each other's roles has lead to unsuccessful collaboration on some individual's parts. Residence life also expressed a request for

mutual sharing of program ideas as they attempt to incorporate course curriculum into residence hall programming, similar to the program idea request from faculty.

The lack of understanding that is common for both faculty and residence life continues to hinder the collaborative efforts of the two divisions. Rather than trying to render the problems, communication continues to error and no solutions have been offered. The lack of communication is a consequence of faculty member and student affairs practitioners operation in two distinct sub-cultures. While both are focused on different aspects of student development and learning, how they go about their work and how they focus their day are not always aligned. The faculty sub-culture at a research university is largely shaped by expectations for research and a key component for faculty life is autonomy. The student affairs sub-culture is more focused on supporting students and meeting their needs, especially residence hall staff that are intricately tied to student life given to their shared living environment. The lack of communication between faculty and residence hall staff is most likely a reflection of differences in the faculty sub-culture and the residence life sub-culture (Kuh & Whitt, 1988).

Logistics

Some of the challenges that faculty have expressed regarding Freshman Focus are logistical concerns. Logistically Freshman Focus can be a difficult to plan given the need to take course pairings, student registration and hall assignments into consideration. The difficulties cause problems for faculty as they are trying to link course curriculum. Some of the challenges expressed include inequitable sharing of responsibility, lack of curriculum connections, variance in faculty status, and insufficient amount of time to plan. Additionally faculty can be assigned to one or more Freshman Focus section, resulting in additional time needed to plan and collaborate. As the academic year begins the pressure is on for both faculty and residence life. Plans for

collaborative programming get pushed to the back burner with increasingly diminished value, thus resulting in increased frustration. Collaboration is a challenge as faculty and residence life staff attempt to find mutual times to program between their already busy schedules. Schedules are more likely to clash as faculty tend to operate more during business hours and residence life function in the evenings. Residence halls also vary across campus making it difficult to find adequate programming space that fits class needs. These logistical concerns make it extremely difficult for faculty to get excited about involvement. When asked, one faculty member commented:

The little lounges, they're very small and the movie night [I hosted] was okay but it was not an adequate room, I mean there was a couch and two chairs, that's not even enough [seating] for the class. I would be interested to see if there are maybe better spaces for those kinds of activities.

Logistical concerns, such as adequate spacing can foil collaborative efforts between faculty and residence life.

Residence life also experienced some logistical challenges when it came to working with the Freshman Focus program. Time and availability was one of the largest challenges impeding collaborative efforts between faculty and residence life. Difficulty occurred when trying to arrange details for planning and implementation of programs. For students and residence life staff, evenings are the best time to host programs and engage students outside of the classroom, whereas for faculty their work day is done and other night time commitments take priority over additional job responsibilities. For many of the faculty members who participate in Freshman Focus the additional time commitment is not recognized by administration and sometimes not realistic. Families and responsibilities at home are a priority as they should be, making it difficult

to return to campus in the evenings. In the planning of these events it was deemed difficult more times than not.

In addition to program planning and implementation, another difficult issue was programming it self. Programming was also difficult because only a few professors shared the same floors in the residence halls. This resulted in faculty coming into the halls multiple times for different course pairings. This was difficult because the faculty involvement expectations increased based on the sections of Freshman Focus they taught. Also buildings that were paired together were not always in close proximity making it difficult to jointly plan programs making faculty do double-duty if they were go to each building to program.

Further challenges with the Freshman Focus program included classroom and residence hall assignments. As mentioned previously, not every student who is in a Freshman Focus class lives on their designated Freshman Focus floor, as well as not every student living on a Freshman Focus floor is part of that Freshman Focus course pairing. The reason for this is students can move about the residence halls somewhat freely, as well as drop courses when they choose, making them no longer a part of that living-learning community. For the student who is in the class but not living on the floor, the availability for them to attend hall programs or study sessions is not always accessible. Difficulties also arise when faculty attempt to equitably offer assignments and out of classroom experiences because not every student lives on their designated Freshman Focus floor.

Lastly, during annual planning phases of Freshman Focus student staff members do not have a chance to meet with faculty because they are not yet on contract. Most program planning takes place in the summer. Both faculty and residence life expressed concerns and interest in

wanting student staff more involved in planning programs and collaborating with faculty early in the process.

For example, one faculty member remarked: Shall we say the upper administrative levels of residence life are cooperative and enlightened but they are not the ones having the effect on the floor. We need them and those lower level people involved. The next step is getting the RAs and us [faculty] acquainted early on, and working together.

The desire and need for these relationships to start early is essential in the success of collaboration once classes are in session. Justification for this argument is that student staff members are the ones in the trenches, living on the floors with the students, and they have the closest connection with both the students and this program. Early and often communication is also essential for successful collaboration, providing time to learn each others' roles and plan and implement well thought out programs (Strommer, 1999).

The four themes that were evident in this study were: involvement, communication, knowledge and logistics. One way to further understanding these findings is through the lens of culture. Chapter Five includes a more detailed discussion of the findings.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMENDATIONS

Faculty and residence life are key players in the success of living-learning communities. Findings from this study show that collaboration is needed from both academic affairs and student affairs if learning outside of the classroom is to take place. As each player focuses their attention on issues of student engagement, attempting to spark student interest as well as bridging the gap between course work and the world that surrounds them, collaboration can only be seen as a benefit as both parties work towards a common goal.

As expressed, faculty and residence life staff are interested in seeing improvements in this living-learning community. In the equal sharing of responsibility to make this program a success, it seems obvious that increased dialogue needs to take place regarding logistical details and programmatic opportunities and resources. Both sides have an interest in understanding each others' culture, but the wealth of knowledge sharing has yet to take place. To continue the work that has already been started these two cultures, academic affairs and student affairs, need to come together finding a common ground of where they can continue their work.

Support and recognition of involvement also appears to be an issue in regards to faculty involvement. It appears that this lack of recognition has created faculty frustrations, leading to a lack of excitement and contribution of time towards the Freshman Focus program. As a result, residence life feels the brunt of faculty pain, as communication and participation outside of the classroom becomes difficult to organize.

Colleges and universities encompass many groups, such as illustrated in the Freshman Focus program (faculty and residence life), that have different and often time completing values

systems. These values are widely held beliefs. Each group has its own set of values that can cause tension when working with other groups whose values may not be inline with each other. For instance, the faculty that I interviewed value teaching and research, spending much of their time either in the classroom, preparing for class, or conducting research. As for residence life they value the student experience outside of the classroom. They also value collaboration with other partners on campus. This is not to say that faculty lack value in collaboration with campus partners. This value looks different for faculty than it does for residence life.

The perceived of the Freshman Focus program value is student success in regards to bridging the gap between living and learning. There is emphasis placed on the out of class experience and collaboration with residence life to make that happen. Values may be espoused but not lived out though, which can cause conflict, tension, and uncertainty as community members are trying to determine which behavior is valued over others (Kuh et al., 1991). This is evident in the faculty working with Freshman Focus. Selected faculty have been told that they are required to participate in this program, spending additional hours outside of their normal schedule to plan and link course curriculum. In addition, faculty are expected to program with residence life staff, bridging the gap between living and learning. But what is rewarded? After being sold the benefits of this program and how they must participate, faculty have seen no rewards for their time and service. There is no financial support for programming or recognition on formal evaluations. This has caused frustration and resentment, often times hindering lines of communication between residence life and faculty.

The culture at large research universities presents a challenge to holistically support living-learning initiatives. Living-learning communities are getting a lot of attention from both faculty and residence life, but upper level administration has failed to take into consideration

faculty interest in participating resulting in negative perceptions regarding involvement. What seems to be at work here is the culture of the university as a whole is focused on research, yet an initiative such as Freshman Focus lies within the teaching realm. For faculty at a research university to fully engage in a living-learning community like Freshman Focus calls for a cultural shift to more fully acknowledge and reward the teaching role. Participation in such a program calls for a shift in management and a review of current rewards systems and definitions of service. Further, core values of faculty life are autonomy and academic freedom. So for programs like Freshman Focus to be successful it calls for greater faculty involvement in planning and developing a program like Freshman Focus in order for faculty to take ownership.

The larger culture of higher education is also at play here. Large research universities are loosely coupled systems. Loose coupling conveys the image that coupled events are responsive, but that each event also preserves its own identity and some evidence of its physical or logical separateness (Weick, 2000,). In regards to this study, academic affairs is loosely coupled to student affairs. The image is that the two are attached through the Freshman Focus program, but each retains their own identity and separateness. The attachment of academic affairs and student affairs is infrequent, weak in its mutual affects and slow to respond. Each group has their own individual perception on ways to accomplish the goals of the program but at this time do not have enough knowledge to work with each other more collaboratively.

The data has shown that each constituent has their own set of means and ends. For those who are loosely coupled often times have a common goal or end, taking a different path or mean to achieve that goal (Weick, 2000). For faculty they feel they are starting from scratch when developing programming opportunities that link curriculum as well as engage students. Residence life on the other hand has an arsenal of programming ideas and wants faculty

involvement, but barriers in communication decrease the chances for partnership. Individually they have solutions to reach the programs goal, but would be more successful if they were not so loosely coupled. For Freshman Focus to be truly successful, and an integral part of the community, there needs to be a shift in culture.

Implications for Practice and Future Research

Results for this study indicate that the future of living-learning communities call for greater communication and greater involvement. Communication needs to take place early and often, on all levels, for tighter coupling of the organization to occur. Communication would bridge the gap and help to resolve some of the logistical, programmatic, and collaborative problems that are currently occurring. Through open lines of communication, faculty and residence life would be able to offer suggestions for improvement on course pairings, building assignments, and insight into cultural knowledge.

Communication needs to occur between faculty and administration regarding support and recognition of involvement in Freshman Focus. If these conversations do not take place, faculty can still remain jaded towards their responsibilities in the program, ultimately affecting the relationship they currently have with residence life. These conversations may be difficult as faculty are attempting to change university values.

There also needs to be a mutual sharing of knowledge. As continuously expressed in this study, communication and lack of knowledge weaken faculty and residence life relationships. Participants should work together to agree upon mutual expectations. Examples for such expectations could include: professionalism in communication, such as prompt response time, needs to be applied working with campus partners as each constituent shares an equal role in the success of Freshman Focus.

Additionally, with the sharing of knowledge, faculty will have insight into student life outside of the classroom as well as programmatic knowledge, preparing them for faculty-student interactions outside of the classroom. These interactions will allow them to get to know students on an individual level, increasing the likelihood for student success in college. Given challenges related to faculty time and work, another recommendation is to adopt a faculty development perspective. This includes involving faculty in planning and development, rethinking faculty roles, and incorporating incentive for faculty involvement.

For residence life, knowledge can be shared during annual planning meetings with faculty. During these meetings residence life staff should provide an overview of facilities for programming, specific hall demographics, hall culture, and location. Residence life staff can also share with faculty successful programming opportunities to increase collaborative efforts. This sharing of information will assist faculty in better understanding the culture of residence life and the sub-culture of each individual residence hall. Knowledge sharing should also continue into the school year. Residence life staff can share student concerns with faculty that may impact student learning and development inside of the classroom. Communication should remain open thereby providing avenues for continuous collaboration.

Additionally, faculty members have an excellent opportunity to share knowledge with their peers, as well as with residence life staff at annual Freshman Focus planning meetings. Examples of information that should be shared are insight into faculty culture, course pairings, syllabi, classroom linkages, as well as opportunities for faculty and residence life staff to collaborate outside of the classroom. Faculty should also express logistical needs, such as programming space, funding, as well as dates and times that work best for programming opportunities.

In addition to the previously mentioned recommendations for practice this study also suggest recommendations for future research. Suggestions for future research would be to research a larger sample population, following individuals for a longer period of time to deduct even more in-depth information regarding collaboration and the cultures that exist. This includes comparing different institutional types and also look at different configurations of living-learning programs to have a greater understand of how faculty and student affairs can work together. Additional recommendations for future research would be to examine age of program, new versus experienced collaborations and cultural workings, focusing on what variables those programs have for success. This study was exploratory, so future research would be of benefit for prolonged engagement and a larger sample size.

As colleges and universities think about creating environments that foster faculty and student interactions, foster student engagement outside of the classroom, and foster student collaborative environments that focus on student development and learning, living-learning communities are fundamental to the holistic development of first-year students. In order for such initiatives to be successful, continued research on collaboration and cultural understandings must be further explored.

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APPENDIX A

Cover Letter/Consent Form

Subject Line: Collaboration Between Academic Affairs & Student Affairs

3/1/07

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Kari Dawson, and I am a graduate student in the College of Education, Department of Educational Leadership and Counseling Psychology. I am pursuing my Masters degree in Higher Education Administration with an emphasis in Student Affairs. I am conducting research to gain a better understanding of the roles of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs in relation to living-learning communities.

You are being asked to take part in an in-depth, open-ended interview to help better understand your role in regard to living-learning communities and engagement. Your participation is important to further the understanding of the collaboration between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs.

I would like to invite you to participate in this study. I am requesting your voluntary participation in this effort. The interview will remain totally confidential—neither your name nor any other identifying information will be asked or recorded. You are free to not answer any questions you find objectionable.

You are being asked to participate in a total of one in-depth interview that will take place over the course of the 2006-2007 academic year. **This study has been reviewed and approved by the WSU Institutional Review Board for human subject participation. If you have questions about the study please contact Kari Dawson at 509-335-5530 or karid@wsu.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a participant please contact the WSU IRB at 509-335-9661 or irb@wsu.edu.**

The information on this consent form is provided so that you can decide whether you wish to participate in this study or not. It is important to understand that your participation is completely voluntary. This means that even if you agree to participate you are free to withdraw from the study at any time or decline to participate in any portion of the study, without penalty.

The interview will be tape recorded so that I can focus on the questions at hand and transcribe our interactions at a later time. Only the researcher will review this audiotape, and the tape will then be placed in a locked file cabinet in my personal residence until August 2007, when they will be destroyed. During this period, I will be the only person to have access to these tapes.

This experiment poses no known risks to your health and your name will not be associated with the findings. Some of the content may address sensitive topics. WSU Counseling Services is available for free. Your participation will take approximately 2-4 hours. Results of this study will be available upon request at the conclusion of the project. If you have any questions not addressed by this consent form, please do not hesitate to ask. You will receive a copy of this form, which you should keep for your records.

Thank you for your time.

Kari Dawson
509.335.5530

APPENDIX B

CONSENT STATEMENT:

I have read the above comments and agree to participate in this research project. I give my permission to be audio taped, under the terms outlined above. **If I have questions about the study please contact Kari Dawson at 509-335-5530 or karid@wsu.edu. If I have questions about my rights as a participant I can contact the WSU IRB at 509-335-9661 or irb@wsu.edu.**

(Name)

(Date)

APPENDIX C

Faculty Interview Questions

The purpose of this study is to learn more about the collaboration between faculty and residence life in regards to the living-learning community Freshman Focus here at WSU. What we are interested in learning more about your experiences with this program.

Demographic

- Name
- Title
- Department
- Freshman Focus course taught

General Involvement

1. Tell me about your involvement with the Freshman Focus program.
 - a. How long have you participated in the Freshman Focus program?
 - b. How did you get involved in this program?
 - c. What things stand out about your experience? Please share any examples that you may have to help me better understand.
2. How would you describe how your overall experience has been?
3. In terms of the faculty role, how does Freshman Focus fit in?
4. How would you characterize the relationships with other members of the Freshman Focus team?
 - a. Please talk about your relationship with joint Freshman Focus faculty.
5. How does your department support your participation in Freshman Focus?
 - a. What are the rewards for participating?
 - b. Why would you continue to participate in the program?
6. What do you see as the opportunities of working with the program? What do you see as the challenges?

Student Learning

1. Do you think Freshman Focus augments the student learning process? How? Please share any specific examples you may have.
2. As part of this living-learning community, do you think it is important for faculty to go into the residence halls? (follow-up or probe for examples)
3. What do you see as the benefits of being in the residence halls in regards to student learning?
 - a. What do you see as a benefit of not working in the residence halls?

Relationship with residence life

1. Describe your relationship with the residence life staff as part of the Freshman Focus program.
 - a. Who do you interact with and in what capacity?

APPENDIX D

Residence Life Interview Questions

The purpose of this study is to learn more about the collaboration between faculty and residence life in regards to the living-learning community Freshman Focus here at WSU. What we are interested in learning more about your experiences with this program.

Demographic Information

- Name
- Position (Residential Education Director, Advanced Paraprofessional, Paraprofessional)
 - How long have you been on staff?
- Length of participation in Freshman Focus
 - How long you lived in a residence hall and in what capacity?

General Involvement

1. Tell me about your involvement in the Freshman Focus program
 - a. How long have you participated in Freshman Focus?
 - b. What experiences, successes or challenges have stood out in regards to your experience with Freshman Focus?
2. How would you describe how your overall experience has been.
3. How would you characterize the relationship with other members of the Freshman Focus team?
 - a. Freshman Focus Faculty
 - b. Other faculty or administrators
 - c. Residence Life or residence hall staff
4. How does Freshman Focus fit into the role you play in residence life?
 - c. How is your department supportive of your participation in Freshman Focus?
 - d. What are the rewards for participating in the program?
5. What do you see as the opportunities of working with the program? What do you see as the challenges?

Student Learning

1. Does Freshman Focus augments the student learning process? Please share any specific examples you may have.
2. As part of this living-learning community, do you think it is important for faculty to be active within the residence halls? (follow-up or probe for examples)
3. What do you see as the benefits of being in the residence halls in regards to student learning?
 - b. What do you see as a benefit of not working in the residence halls?

Relationship with faculty

1. In what ways do you interact with faculty members?
 - a. Who do you typically interact with and what do those interactions look like?
2. What challenges have you had in getting faculty to come into the residence halls?
3. How do you feel about faculty not being involved in the residence halls?
4. What challenges or success have you had in working with faculty and the Freshman Focus program?
5. What would you say to faculty regarding the Freshman Focus program?
6. How could faculty facilitate your involvement more? Is there something that is currently missing that would help to make this program more successful?
7. If you were in charge of the Freshman Focus program, what would you do differently?
8. What do you see as the connection between academic affairs and student affairs in regards to living-learning communities such as Freshman Focus?
9. How does the Freshman Focus program bridge the gap between academic affairs and student affairs?
10. How do you define engagement as it applies to higher education, student learning and your work with students?