Learning Communities at Eastfield

Eastfield College's commitment to excellence in teaching and learning has opened new pathways for enhancing the learning process. Learning Communities Courses, which advocate collaborative learning, will be offered beginning Fall 2010.

What is a Learning Community (LC)?

Learning Communities consist of two or more courses with a common interdisciplinary theme. They may be team-taught or linked together in an effort to foster increased intellectual connections between students, between students and faculty, and between disciplines. Learning Community courses will be taught by two or more faculty members who will coordinate syllabi and assignments and provide students with a diverse and enriching learning experience. Students must enroll in all courses in the Learning Community and cannot withdraw from one class without also dropping the others.

Types of Learning Communities

➢ Linked: two or more courses having the same cohort of students. The course may be linked thematically or by content. The faculty may plan collaboratively but is not required to team-teach.

➢ Coordinated Studies: Team taught coordinated courses with a common theme. The faculty involved remain in the classroom during scheduled class time for all courses.

Benefits to Students Enrolling in Learning Communities

➢ Multiple faculty members present multiple perspectives based on shared material, encouraging the use of critical thinking skills.

➢ Courses taught by multiple faculty members foster increased individualized instruction and a closer working relationship between student and faculty.

➢ Implement course knowledge towards interdisciplinary fields and apply that knowledge outside of classroom settings.

➢ Increase focus on student centered and active learning where students are frequently required to collaborate on the development of creative presentations, lead class discussions on assigned topics and conduct research.

➢ Extended class time provides more opportunities for field research, exploration outside of the classroom and experiential learning.

➢ Communal setting enhances students' ability to work more closely together.

➢ College credit earned for more than one course.
Example: "The Immigrant Experience" = History + Sociology = 6 credit hours

Benefits to Faculty Teaching in Learning Communities

➢ Collaboration with other faculty facilitates cross disciplinary relationships eliminating institutional isolation.

➢ Cross disciplinary relationships foster mutual support and collaborative learning.

➢ Promotes intellectual vitality and in-depth analysis of discipline.

➢ Extended class time allows more opportunities for innovation and more engaging teaching experiences.

➢ Communal setting encourages increased interaction with students.

How will Learning Community courses be taught?

Courses may be team-taught by two or more faculty members or, in the case of linked courses, they may be taught separately. In either case, the coursework will be coordinated, and faculty will plan and implement pedagogical methods that will complement each class. Learning within the classroom will become a social act, and cooperative and collaborative pedagogy will be a key component. The same cohort of students will register for each course in the Learning Community.

Compensation for Teaching a Learning Community

➢ **Linked:** No additional compensation will be awarded. This type of course relates to curriculum development and institutional service as listed under a faculty's normal contractual obligations.

Adjunct faculty will be compensated for the course taught at the adjunct rate of pay.

➢ **Coordinated Studies/Team-Taught**: These courses are more collaborative in nature and require that all instructors be present during scheduled class time for *all* courses in the learning community. Faculty will be given a stipend commensurate with the adjunct rate for the companion course(s); the course in their discipline will count as part of course load.

As Learning Communities are developed and taught at Eastfield College, it will be the expectation that courses taught in the Coordinated Studies modality obtain a maximum of 30 students for Social Sciences courses and 24 for Science courses.

Adjunct faculty will be compensated for *each* course in the Learning Community at the adjunct rate of pay.

Proposal Process, Step by Step

➢ Step one: Discuss the Learning Community course with the appropriate Dean or Deans.

➢ Step two: Complete the EFC Learning Community Proposal form.

➢ Step three: Submit the proposal to the appropriate Dean or Deans for signature(s). Then, the Faculty submits both a printed copy and electronic copy to the Dean of Academic Enrichment.

➢ Step four: For previously taught Learning Communities, the Dean of Academic Enrichment obtains comparative data, such as retention/completion rates, for the learning community and traditional course, and the standard student assessment.

➢ Step five: Dean of Academic Enrichment forwards submissions to the Learning Community Mentoring Team.

➢ Step six: Learning Community Mentoring Team evaluates the proposals using the Learning Communities Proposal Evaluation Rubric and provides coaching to strengthening proposals as needed.

➢ Step seven: Dean of Academic Enrichment submits proposals, rubrics, and appropriate data to the Deans' Council for approval.

➢ Step eight: Dean of Academic Enrichment notifies faculty of Deans' Council decision.

➢ Step nine: Upon approval, proposal will be presented to the Instructional Council as a matter of information by the Dean of Academic Enrichment.

➢ Step ten: Respective Deans work with faculty to build the course schedule.

Proposals must be resubmitted each semester. However, Learning Communities that teach one course in the fall and the companion course in the spring, (ENGL1301/HIST1301 and ENGL1302/HIST1302) may be renewed annually.

Approval Criteria

➢ Rationale for offering the program as a Learning Community.

➢ The extent to which cross disciplinary themes, projects, assignments and other learning experiences may be incorporated.

➢ Alignment with college goals and strategic plan.

➢ Core tier compatibility and course prerequisite/co-requisite alignment.

Role of the Dean of Academic Enrichment

➢ For previously taught Learning Communities obtains data such as retention/completion rates, learning community to traditional course comparative data, and the standard student assessment.

➢ Coordinates and submits proposals to the Learning Communities Mentoring Team for scoring and coaching.

➢ Coordinates and submits proposal to the Deans' Council for approval.

➢ Informs the Instructional Council of new Learning Community courses.

➢ Works in tandem with the Deans to ensure all components are appropriately executed (i.e. course build and instructor contracts).

➢ Works with the Director of Academic Advising in educating the advisors of Learning Community courses to enhance the counseling of students.

➢ Ensures the Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and the standardized student survey for the overall Learning Community, not the specific courses, are assessed and documented.

➢ Ensures proper maintenance of a public web page explaining the concept of Learning Communities and availability of courses.

Role of the Learning Communities Mentoring Team

➢ Composed of a minimum of four faculty with experience teaching in a Learning Community.

➢ Scores proposals using Learning Communities Proposal Evaluation Rubric and offers suggestions to strengthen proposals.

➢ Assists the Dean of Academic Enrichment with the development and maintenance of the Learning Community public and intranet web pages.

- ➢ Reviews and revises the Learning Communities Handbook as necessary.

- ➢ Assists the Dean of Academic Enrichment with educating the advisors and marketing courses.

- ➢ Serves as mentors to faculty wishing to teach in a Learning Community for the first time.

- ➢ Provide a minimum of one staff development session per year aimed at faculty wishing to teach in a Learning Community.

- ➢ Assess and document the success of the Learning Community program at Eastfield.

Assessment

- ➢ Faculty teaching each course will be evaluated independently using standard evaluation methods.

- ➢ The content of each course will be evaluated independently using standard evaluation methods.

- ➢ The Learning Community teaching methodology will be evaluated using a standardized assessment tool administered to students at the conclusion of the courses.

- ➢ At the close of each semester student success and retention rates will be compared to similar courses which are not taught in a Learning Community environment. This assessment should be based upon data provided by the Office of Institutional Research.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

- ➢ Students will be able to explain the significant issues/areas that connect the courses being taught using:
    1. A semester long portfolio of one-minute, in class essays describing the topics covered.
    2. A multiple choice test at the end of the semester to identify issues.

- ➢ Students will work collaboratively and productively with others.

- ➢ Students will be able to foster a sense of belonging in the academic community of Eastfield.

➢ Students will achieve an awareness of university and departmental resources by participating in project assignments. Success will be determined using a survey at the beginning and a survey at conclusion of the Learning Community.

Tips and Suggestions

➢ Faculty must reconcile different teaching styles. Attempt to visit each other's traditional courses to develop an understanding of teaching styles, pedagogical approaches, and ways of working with students.

➢ Select the right partner and evaluate the success of the partnership on a regular basis.

➢ Avoid falling into the trap of students playing one against the other.

➢ Be consistent in expectations of students with differing capabilities.

➢ Be prepared to be a learner as well as a teacher.

➢ Intertwining disciplines and tying content to the common theme requires flexibility, creativity and adaptability.

➢ Faculty involvement in marketing and recruiting students is imperative. Create flyers. Work with advisors and ask that they promote the class.

➢ Be mindful of the partnership while feeling free to challenge each other.

➢ Discuss the concept of a Learning Community and how they may differ from traditional courses with students the first day of classes.
  1. Explain that assignments and projects are student centered and interdisciplinary.
  2. Emphasis that students are frequently required to collaborate on the development of presentations, lead class discussions on assigned topics and conduct research.
  3. Communicate to students that credit will be awarded for two courses and the workload is no different from that which they would encounter in two traditional courses.
  4. Remind students that they cannot drop one course without dropping both.
  5. Encourage students to speak freely, express themselves, and learn from each other.

➢ Verify that students are enrolled in each course by checking the roster for both classes.

TIMELINE

Fall Semester

Dean of Academic Enrichment calls for proposals	Prior to Spring Break
Proposals due to Dean of Academic Enrichment	Convocation Week

Spring Semester

Dean of Academic Enrichment calls for proposals	Prior to Thanksgiving
Proposals due to Dean of Academic Enrichment	Convocation Week

APPENDIX

Learning Communities Proposal Evaluation Rubric

Proposals for new courses will be evaluated based upon the Eastfield College Learning Community Proposal form by the Dean of Academic Enrichment along with the Learning Communities Mentoring Team. Proposals must be approved by the appropriate division deans prior to consideration. The proposal may be accepted, rejected, or conditionally accepted pending revisions.

Criteria	Inadequate	Adequate	Superior
Rationale for the Learning Community			
Integration of course content across disciplines into a common theme			
Assignments and assessments clearly defined and integrated			
Indication of relationship to college goals (retention, engagement and collaboration)			
Integrated student learning outcomes and assessments defined			
Proposal must be scored a minimum of Adequate in each category to be considered for approval.			

EFC Learning Community Proposal

Proposals for new courses are accepted on an ongoing basis. Anyone wishing to teach in a Learning Community environment must complete this form, which will explain how instruction will meet the College Goals specified in Eastfield's strategic plan. Please submit the proposal well in advance of scheduling deadlines.

Please submit completed proposals to your division dean. Approved proposals will be submitted to the Learning Communities Mentoring Team for consideration and endorsement. The proposal may be accepted, rejected, or conditionally accepted pending revisions.

This form must be typewritten. For convenience, you may complete and submit it electronically.

Name(s)

Course Title(s)

Course Rubric(s):

Division(s): _____   Anticipated start date: _____

Preferred Days and Times:

Alternative Days and Times:

Type of Learning Community:

☐
   Coordinated Studies/ Teamed

☐
Linked

Please provide a brief description/synopsis of the Learning Community that may be used in scheduling/marketing publication(s).

Identify the rationale for offering the course(s) as a Learning Community.

Explain how collaborative teaching and learning will be incorporated into the curriculum by identifying common cross disciplinary themes, projects, assignments and other learning experiences.

Describe how this Learning Community will enhance the college and how it relates to the college goals and strategic plan:

Please list Student Learning Outcomes for the Learning Community.

Explain how the Student Learning Outcomes will be assessed.

Please provide any additional information that might be appropriate in the decision making process.

For previously taught Learning Communities provide data such as retention/completion rates, learning community to traditional course comparative data, and the standard student assessment.

Approved by:

_____   _____
Faculty Member / Date   Faculty Member / Date

_____   _____
Instructional Dean / Date   Instructional Dean/Date

_____
Dean of Academic Enrichment/Date

_____
Vice President for Teaching and Learning / Date

Student Survey for Learning Communities

On a scale of 1 – 5 how would you describe your level of interaction with:

1. Peers

    __ Not at all
    __ Less than other classes
    __ Equal to other classes
    __ Greater than other classes
    __ Far greater than other classes

2. Faculty

    __ Not at all
    __ Less than other classes
    __ Equal to other classes
    __ Greater than other classes
    __ Far greater than other classes

3. College

    __ Not at all
    __ Less than other classes
    __ Equal to other classes
    __ Greater than other classes
    __ Far greater than other classes