

Request for Proposals

Learning Communities: A Curricular Experiment

Learning Communities adapted from existing courses with cohorts of twenty students will be available as a teaching opportunity in both the fall and spring semesters. Students at the sophomore level and above will have the opportunity to enroll in learning community cohorts of twenty students each. Each group of students will be enrolled in a pair of thematically related three- or four-credit courses designed explicitly to help them engage more fully with the college experience. Each pair of faculty members teaching in the learning community will work together and with the students to provide coherent links between the courses that will draw the students into active engagement with the subjects.

The learning community model will emphasize a set of skills appropriate to mid- to upper-level work in each respective discipline that is part of the learning community. Each learning community will be led by two faculty members, each offering a three- or four-credit course from among courses in all disciplines. One or both of these courses can be from the liberal arts core, but courses outside the core are also suitable for pairing with core classes or pairing with each other. By structuring the courses around a linked theme or collection of topics, the two courses will become the basis for the learning community's joint discussions and out-of-classroom experiences.

Proposals by each pair of faculty members should be designed so that they accomplish the following:

- their respective courses will 'speak' to each other in the sense of allowing students to make connections across disciplines;
- their innovative teaching strategies explicitly encourage active student learning and build college-level skills;
- their courses build in out-of-classroom experiences that allow students to make connections between what they are learning in class and the outside world;
- their courses and approach mentor individual students, helping each one navigate his or her initial college experiences successfully;
- their courses encourage the development of camaraderie among the students in the cohort and of connections to the opportunities offered by LIU Post.

The expectation is that students who enroll in these learning communities will be more academically successful and socially happier. Vigorous, engaging courses designed with these students in mind and stronger personal relationships with faculty and with other students should generate a higher percentage of successful students and eventually a stronger group of graduating students.

And now, some details:**1. Course selection**

The selected courses should be ones that are likely to fit into students' core or major requirements. Many of the majors have mid-level and upper-level courses that are typically taken in the discipline. That might be paired with a core course whose knowledge base complements the major. *Proposals that pair any combination of courses are also welcome.*

2. Teaching strategies

In-class formats that ask students to be active in the classroom—discussions, small group work, peer teaching, periodic responses to professor-delivered content—are strongly encouraged, in contrast to a format predominantly of silent note-taking. Similarly, out-of-class work should be designed so that students take responsibility for independent mastery of material, in contrast to simple “read such and such” directives. Incorporating some team-taught sessions might also be an option.

3. Out-of-classroom experiences

One of the key components of the learning community experience is getting students out into the world to encourage them to think about the connections between what they are learning and its applications. This might take a number of forms: community service, field trips, visits to performances.

4. Mentoring

Proposals should make some arrangement so that the two faculty members, together or separately, meet at some point with individual students. The faculty members should also be cognizant that they should talk with each other regularly about their students with the aim of helping any student who might be struggling.

5. Camaraderie and Connections to Post

Proposals should include some plans for other ways of building community. These might take the form of a get-together for food, or a reflective circle, or a celebration of a semester milestone, or tours of unusual but useful aspects of Post—some fun that connects people.

6. Departmental Approval

Make sure to discuss your plans with your Department Chair, so your Chair can endorse the project and facilitate scheduling and co-ordination.

Timetable:

- Applications will be accepted throughout the 2014-15 academic year. Please send all applications to John Lutz at John.Lutz@liu.edu

Thanks from the Learning Communities Committee

John Lutz, Director	English, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Rick Desrochers	Theater, School of Visual and Performing Arts
Vic DiVenere	Earth and Environmental Science, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Michele Dornisch	Curriculum and Instruction, College of Education, Information and Technology
Nancy Frye	Psychology, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Eric Lichten	Sociology, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Marci Swede	Health Sciences, School of Health Professions and Nursing
Brian Sweeney	Sociology, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Shawn Welnak	Philosophy, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

For more information, contact Professor John Lutz in the English Department (John.Lutz@liu.edu) or any other member of the Committee.

APPLICATION FORM
LEARNING COMMUNITIES

FACULTY MEMBER #1

NAME_____

DEPARTMENT_____

EMAIL ADDRESS_____

PHONE _____

COURSE NUMBER AND TITLE_____

SIGNATURE, DEPARTMENT CHAIR_____

FACULTY MEMBER #2

NAME_____

DEPARTMENT_____

EMAIL ADDRESS_____

PHONE _____

COURSE NUMBER AND TITLE_____

SIGNATURE, DEPARTMENT CHAIR_____

On a separate page, please indicate describe the manner in which these two courses will meet the goals described in the request for proposals. (Your descriptions should not exceed 750 words.)

- How will the two courses encourage students to make connections across disciplines?
- What teaching strategies will be used to encourage the active participation of students?
- How will the two courses encourage students to make connections with the campus community?
- What forms of mentoring will take place both in and out of the classroom?
- How will the two courses improve student learning?

Please include a description for each course and an accompanying picture or graphic for the purposes of advertising.

Please send the applications to John Lutz at John.Lutz@liu.edu