

Washington Center

NEWS

SPRING 2000

Transforming College Campuses through Learning Communities: A Synthesis of Plans and Perspectives

It was the fall of 1996. It seemed as though the Washington Center's Learning Communities Project had just been announced when requests from participant hopefuls started arriving by the truckload. Public and private, two- and four-year colleges and universities, from Maine to Hawaii, all wanted to be considered for the three-year project.

Amazingly, participation in the project would bring no new funding to individual schools. On the contrary, substantial resource commitments would be required from participants. Furthermore, there was no assurance of successful outcomes. Even so, more than 250 institutions of higher learning hoped to take part.

A daunting and lengthy application process narrowed the field considerably. By the end of 1996, 21 colleges and universities (representing a total of 30 actual campuses) had been selected to participate.

So, what was it? Why was the response so immediate and intense? What would be gained from participation? How would students ultimately benefit? Most important, were the project's objectives achieved?

The Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education, a public service initiative of The Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington, has long supported the development of learning communities at a state and regional level.

continued on page 2

Participating Institutions: Antioch University, Bates Technical College, Bellevue Community College, Bellingham Technical College, Big Bend Community College, Cascadia Community College, Central Washington University, Centralia College, City University, Clark College, Clover Park Technical College, Columbia Basin College, Eastern Washington University, Edmonds Community College, Everett Community College, Gonzaga University, Grays Harbor College, Green River Community College, Heritage College, Highline Community College, Lake Washington Technical College, Lower Columbia College, North Seattle Community College, Northwest Indian College, Olympic College, Pacific Lutheran University, Peninsula College, Pierce College, Renton Technical College, Saint Martin's College, Seattle Central Community College, Seattle Pacific University, Seattle University, Shoreline Community College, Skagit Valley College, South Puget Sound Community College, South Seattle Community College, Spokane Community College, Spokane Falls Community College, Tacoma Community College, The Evergreen State College, University of Puget Sound, University of Washington, Walla Walla Community College, Washington State University, Wenatchee Valley College, Western Washington University, Whatcom Community College, Whitworth College, Yakima Valley Community College

Transforming College Campuses

(continued)

With generous funding from the U.S. Department of Education's Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE), the Washington Center initiated the Learning Communities Dissemination Project. Three main objectives were the focus of the project: (1) provide support to the participating campuses as they developed, strengthened and evaluated their learning community programs; (2) disseminate information about the learning community initiatives on these campuses to a national audience; (3) feature the experience and knowledge gained by participating institutions at a national learning communities conference to be held in the project's third and final year.

In May 1999, as the Learning Communities Dissemination Project was nearing its completion date, the Washington Center held a national conference in Seattle. The three-day symposium, "Transforming Campuses through Learning Communities," offered a remarkable array of workshops and seminars presented by project participants eager to share their experiences and conclusions.

Now, in this issue of *Washington Center NEWS*, we are pleased to share with you a collection of thoughts and observations from that conference. Educators from participating colleges and universities report on their efforts to get their learning communities more firmly rooted, as do teams from outside the FIPSE project group who have been engaged in parallel efforts. This newsletter is designed to give you the full range of conversations generated about learning communities in particular, and the transformation of education in general. Within these covers, you will find excerpts from talks by keynote speakers Parker Palmer and Laura Rendon, a host of engaging essays that raise provocative questions about the many dimensions of sound learning community practices, a summary of current research on the efficacy of learning communities by Jerri Lindblad, and a look at the year ahead.

We hope you enjoy your reading!



Emily Decker and Jeanine Elliott, Washington Center, sport conference caps.



Lynn Adair, Toiya Jist, Sue Hirst, Jeanine Elliott, Kelly Ampulski, Barb LaMere and Leo Determan look up from staffing registration.



Sue Hirst, Barb LaMere, Lynn Adair, Jeanine Elliott, and Kelly Ampulski hear a new story at the conference registration table.

Learning Communities: Reweaving the Culture of Disconnection

Excerpts from a keynote address by Parker J. Palmer

Washington Center Conference, May, 1999

After reading the FIPSE report—and sensing the spirit of this conference—I can tell that there has been a big change in the question that the advocates of “learning communities” have been pressing upon the university.

A few years ago, you were asking the powers-that-be, “Would you mind if we created a few ‘structures of connectedness’ that would relate teachers and students and subjects in some new ways?” Today, you seem to be asking, “Would you mind if we fundamentally undermine academic culture and transform some of its most basic values—not just its structures but the habits of heart and mind that academics tend to bring to their work?” And for some strange reason, the response you are getting today is less benign and more resistant than the response you were getting several years ago!

The FIPSE report shows that you can’t create structures of connectedness in the academy without challenging other dimensions of that culture. As soon as you start working toward more connectedness—between faculty, between faculty and students—My question is, “Why is connectedness so difficult to achieve in the university?” Lest that seem like a no-brainer, let me



Parker Palmer invites conference participants to consider the power of community.

press it a little deeper. “Why is connectedness so difficult to achieve when we know—with considerable certainty—that it is connectedness that allows us best to pursue our mission, the mission of knowing, teaching, and learning?”

We know that knowing, teaching, and learning are communal acts. We also have several generations of solid research on the fact that pedagogies and curricula of connectedness help people get smarter faster about complex fields of information than do competition and dumping data into people’s heads. We know these things—so is connectedness so difficult to achieve in higher education?

The basic answer I want to give is that the academy has cultivated a powerful culture in which disconnection is regarded as a virtue rather than the pathology that it is. If we don’t face that fact—and understand why it is so—I don’t think we are going to get very far with our agenda for institutional change.

Academic culture holds disconnection as a virtue on at least two levels: intellectual and sociological. Intellectually, the academy is committed to an epistemology, a way of knowing, which claims that if you don’t disconnect yourself from the object of study—whether it’s an episode in history, or a body of literature, or a phenomenon of the natural world—your knowledge of it will not be valid.

This “objectivism” claims that, if you don’t create distance between yourself and that object of knowing, the worst possible thing will happen: your subjectivity will slop over onto it and your knowledge of it will be impure. The implicit concept of truth in academic culture is that it consists of objects of knowledge delivered to others, as it were, “untouched by human hands,” antiseptic and uncontaminated. Objective truth has been construed—or misconstrued—as knowledge that lacks any connection to

the inwardness of the human spirit, the human heart, the human soul.

For a century and more we have venerated “detached scholarship” (while disciplines that require close encounters between the knower and the known—art, music, dance, and the like—have been pushed to the bottom of the academic totem pole). When subjectivity is factored out of knowing, discredited by our epistemology, relationship disappears: there is no relationship without an investment of selfhood in “the other.” Analytic rationality alone cannot connect me to thee.

I only have two problems with this objectivist epistemology. One is that it is morally deforming, and the other is that it’s not true. Aside from that, I think it’s a splendid way of doing business!

The claim that objectivism is untrue is grounded in my reading of the intellectual biographies of scholars from many fields: I have yet to find one whose knowledge did not emerge from a deep and often costly investment of selfhood in the world he or she was studying.

Objectivism is morally deforming because it sets students at arm’s length from the world they are studying: they end up with a head full of knowledge but without any sense of personal responsibility for what they know, no sense of connectedness to the world that their knowledge reveals to them.

My own story is typical, I think. I was educated in the history of the Holocaust by objectivist historians who, because of their distanced approach, left me feeling that all of those horrors had happened on another planet, to another species. I failed to learn that the very community in which I grew up, on the North Shore of Chicago, practiced its own form of systemic antisemitism. Lacking that knowledge was morally deficient.

Deeper still, my objectivist introduction to the Holocaust utterly failed to

“ I believe that we educators hold in our hands the power to form, or deform, students’ souls, their sense of self and their relation to the world. ”

reveal that I had within myself a kind of fascism of the heart—I mean a shadow that rises up when the difference between you and me gets too great, when you threaten my conception of what’s good or true or beautiful, and I need to find some way to kill you off. I will do it not with a gun or a gas chamber but with some sort of mental dismissal (“Oh, you’re just a this or that...”) that renders you lifeless, irrelevant to my world. Ignorant about the fascism in my own heart, I was not only morally deficient but morally dangerous.

It is not a real education when a student is given information about “the big story” at such dispassionate distance that it does not connect with “the little story” of his or her life. Indeed, that practice is the root of ethical deformation: we need to ask why the academy regards it as a virtue when it breeds the sort of cultured ignorance that makes so-called educated people deeply dangerous.

Why is the culture of disconnection so tenacious? Because it makes education—and life—less messy and more manageable when we teach, learn, and live at arm’s length from the world and from ourselves. What will it take for us to insist on making these connections despite their inherent messiness? We must overcome our rightful fear that the power of the institution will come down on us with punishment when we challenge its most deeply rooted commitments.

How do people overcome the fear of punishment—people like Rosa Parks, Vaclav Havel, Dorothy Day, Nelson Mandela and all the unnamed thousands whose courage they represent? I believe that these people came to a moment of realization—a moment that *we* can experience as well—when they understood that no punishment anyone could lay on them could possibly be greater than the punishment they laid on themselves by conspiring in their own diminishment.

These exemplars of authentically high culture are people who finally decided to live “divided no more,” to no longer act on the outside in a way that defied some truth they held deeply on the inside. Only so could Rosa Parks find the power to confront and help transform the system of racism with which she had collaborated by sitting at the back of the bus...

Are the moral stakes in our work as high as those in the great social struggles I have cited? I believe they are. I believe that we educators hold in our hands the power to form, or deform, students’ souls, their sense of self and their relation to the world. The world is badly served by a system of education that disconnects people from each other, from their own hearts, and from their own knowledge, thus encouraging the divided life. The ethics of knowing, teaching, and learning are our responsibility—so I feel proud to be associated in any way with the work represented at this conference. I wish you power and hope as you carry it forward.

Parker J. Palmer is a teacher, writer, and activist whose most recent books are *The Courage to Teach* and *Let Your Life Speak*. In 1998, The Leadership Project, a national survey of 11,000 faculty and administrators, named Dr. Palmer as one of the thirty “most influential senior leaders” in higher education and one of the ten key “agenda-setters” of the past decade.



Palmer asks when we, too, will decide to live “divided no more.”

Dialogue Session

Participant: Can you talk a bit about how our current evaluation system breeds the kind of disconnection you have been talking about?

P.P.: That's a very apt question, because the evaluation system—for students and faculty alike—comprises the punishments and rewards that keep our academic culture locked in place, making us all so fearful of judgment that we are drained of the courage to challenge the culture. It's a sociological reality that this system looms over everything and we tend to become captive to it.

But sociology has a tendency to frame its insights in such all-pervasive, systemic terms that the knowledge itself becomes paralyzing for the people who possess it. I value the sociological perspectives—it gives me lenses with which to see how institutions exercise their power. But what we sometimes lose in our systemic analyses is a sense of “the power of one,” the power of witness, the power of the individual to make a difference.

By studying movements, I have found a conceptual map that allows me to understand how one person's act of witnessing to truth in whatever arena one inhabits can make a difference. That's why I was urging us [in my speech] to start thinking like community organizers, rather than administrators or faculty, in our efforts to transform academic culture.

Community organizers begin by trying to connect systemic reform with the power of individual expressions of truth. We need to encourage each other to embody and exercise that power in whatever ways we can. And the young people with whom we work need to be encouraged about their potentials for doing that as well.

What I see in movements is how individuals and the system are connected—not with the wave of a wand, but through a series of disciplined steps that take us beyond

isolated acts into joining “communities of congruence,” gaining the capacity to “go public,” and embracing “alternative rewards” for our lives...

One of the first things a community organizer does is to work very hard developing those communities of congruence where people who are making the decision to live divided no more can find support. Those communities were built into the Civil Rights movement in the form of African-American churches, where people were constantly returning to the roots of their lives, finding again their courage to be full human beings in a racist world. Every movement requires some counterpart to those spiritual “base camps”.

Participant: In talking about different kinds of community, how large can a community be? Can you give us some idea about scale when we are talking about communities in education?

P.P.: I don't have a number for that, and I don't think anyone does. On questions of scale, Martin Buber said, years ago, “The only kind of community we've got is a community of communities.” So much depends on the subsets, the little platoons, as Edmund Burke called them. Earlier, I told the story about the nursing students who were asked—on an exam—for the name of the woman who cleaned the floors in their building. In asking that question, I think their professor was trying to strengthen that “little platoon” by helping students understand that all of the people you interact with, locally, are vitally important in the pursuit of mission.

Participant: Whose idea was it (at University X) to invite the whole community—faculty, staff, administrators, students—into the conversation about community on campus that you facilitated?

P.P.: It was the idea of a faculty planning committee who felt that there was so much unspoken hurt in their “community” about who was not at the table that it just had to be done. I admired their decision very much—and then I got very scared about how to facilitate such a diverse group! But remarkable things happened during that session: people who previously had not been heard from found their voices. I will never forget the man from the maintenance department who, after this session, sought and received permission to attend a faculty teaching and learning workshop because both he and his supervisor had embraced the notion that in an academic community, we are all teachers.

Participant: I want to endorse your comment about the power of such marginalized people as the grandmothers we saw in Chile and Argentina fomenting social change. I come from a big research university where, four years ago, we founded a very successful residential learning community. Eighty percent of the credit for that belongs to residence hall staff. What energized them was the chancellor, who was making his first rounds after his appointment, visiting all units of the university to ask them the question, “Are you in the hotel business or the education business?” That energized them to the point where they created this learning community.

P.P.: That's a wonderful place to draw to a close. Let me just say that what a community organizer does, I think, is to look for energy points like those in the residence hall staff, and figure out how to amplify that energy. If you start looking at an academic community that way, it's so interesting what powers show up that are not normally on our screens!

Guarding the Spirit: Parker J. Palmer's Workshop on "Inner Work for Teachers and Reformers"

Terry Martin
Central Washington University

In 1998, The Leadership Project named Parker Palmer one of the thirty "most influential senior leaders" in higher education and one of ten key "agenda-setters" of the past decade, saying, "He has inspired a generation of teachers and reformers with evocative visions of community, knowing, and spiritual wholeness."

On May 20, 1999, that is precisely what he did for fifty of us in a memorable, three-hour, pre-conference workshop titled "Guarding the Spirit: Inner Work for Teachers and Reformers."

We knew this was no ordinary workshop when Palmer began by inviting us to close our eyes and join him in a few minutes of silence, during which he encouraged us to "feel our weight and presence." He then shared one of his favorite Quaker sayings: "Don't speak unless you can improve upon the silence."

Internal/External Orientations: The Mobius Strip

During the first part of the workshop, Palmer shared his ideas about our tendency to externalize professional practice, pointing out that most of our training as educators focuses on making skillful moves in the external world.

"The secret which is hidden in plain sight," according to Palmer, "is that it's not only the moves you make, but the spirit in which you make them, that determines the difference between life-giving and death-giving practice." He invited us to explore the inner animation of those moves: "the best work that happens when deep speaks to deep."

Palmer says that "bad teaching" is practiced where there is a disconnect

between the teacher's thoughts and moves and his/her authentic self. Academic culture makes a virtue of this kind of disconnect, or "objective" approach, rather than viewing it as the pathology it is. This disconnect is morally deforming and false, and leads to discouragement for those working in an academic culture.

To illustrate this inner/outer dichotomy and the tension that often arises between one's internal and external selves in teaching, Palmer showed us a small paper strip, held flat. "This," he said, "represents the first stage of life. For babies and children, there is no difference between inner and outer, no duplicity or holding back, no guile. What you see is what you get. This undivided quality is the image of human wholeness."



Washington Center Planning Committee members Kathi Hiyane-Brown (Tacoma Community College), Marlene Bosanko (Tacoma Community College), Emily Decker (Washington Center), Michael Meyer (Bellevue Community College), Roberta Matthews (La Guardia Community College), Lois Harris (Antioch University) and Rob Cole (The Evergreen State College) participate in a seminar with Parker Palmer.

“The secret which is hidden in plain sight is that it’s not only the moves you make, but the spirit in which you make them, that determines the difference between life-giving and death-giving practice.”

Stage two arises in early adolescence as a division begins between one’s on-stage and off-stage self (two separate sides of the same strip of paper). The individual begins to develop a wall of self-protectiveness (think middle school and high school) and this disconnect begins to cause pain. Palmer suggests that academic culture invites us to stay at this stage.

Stage three occurs when the division becomes too painful and we decide it’s no longer working. At this point, we long for a center, a classic circle shape (the rolling up of the strip of paper). We’re searching for a deeper truth, for a litmus test for our decisions, for congruence. In this stage, we’re attempting to organize our lives around a central principle, to become more centered. Here the strip is closed. The problem with this stage is that

there is still a barrier between internal and external realities, and the inner life remains disconnected. This phase may well lead to stress reduction, but because of its closed nature, it doesn’t represent the full possibilities for the individual that stage four does.

Stage four is represented by the mobius strip. With one turn of the strip, the paper suddenly and seamlessly becomes a circle in which there is no longer any “inner” and “outer” edge. This represents a return to the childhood state of wholeness, to which you now bring experience, thoughtfulness, wisdom. It allows a natural flow from inward to outward, and back again. At this point, we can be reflective and thoughtful about where our moves are coming from. Our inner realities are co-creating the reality around us.

A Teaching Story

In the second part of the workshop, Palmer focused on a fourth century Taoist poem entitled “The Woodcarver,” from *The Way of Chuang Tzu*, translated by Thomas Merton. The poem tells of a master woodcarver who makes a bell stand of precious wood, a stand so lovely that all those who see it are astounded by its beauty and claim it must be the work of spirits.

When they ask the artisan, he replies that he is only a woodsman. He explains that he approached his task by guarding his spirit, not expending it on trifles. He fasted and spent time in the forest looking at trees until the right one—with the bell stand in it—appeared before him. The poem ends this way: “What happened? / My own collected thought / Encountered the hidden potential in the wood; / From this live encounter came the work / Which you ascribe to the spirits.”

As we discussed the poem, we explored several questions and issues:

- Why does the carver do the work he does?
- What’s at stake for him and the other parties involved?
- How important is inner preparation when approaching important tasks—in other words, doing the work before the work?
- What is the power behind the “tyranny of technique,” i.e. focusing on the chisel for far too long?
- Is there value in naming and addressing one’s demons?
- What is the relationship between the woodcarver and the tree, and is it true that the deepest moments of learning sometimes require cutting, require metaphorical deaths?
- What about guarding our spirits vs. giving our spirits away?



Diane Gillespie (University of Washington-Bothell), Marie Eaton (Fairhaven College) and Parker Palmer consider issues of leadership and transformation.

“ . . . by understanding how movements work,
each of us may discover that we are already engaged
in a movement for educational reform.”

The Discipline of Open Inquiry

In the third part of the workshop, we divided ourselves into groups of three and reflected on how the poem touches on things we were thinking about, working on and questioning in our lives. This was not a back and forth discussion. Instead, two people were asked to “hold” the third person in an open, focused, inviting and safe way. This meant making a commitment not to fix or advise, but to listen deeply and to ask open, honest questions that might help us “hear one another into speech.” The goal of the activity was to practice the discipline of open inquiry without judgement.

“Inner Work, Rightly Done” and the Possibilities for Social Change

Finally, Palmer brought us back together to discuss the link between “inner work, rightly done” and the possibility of social change. He shared a map of social reality he developed by studying recent historically significant social movements, including the civil rights movement, the women’s movement, the movements for freedom in eastern Europe, South Africa and Latin America, and the movement for gay and lesbian rights. Palmer has identified the following four stages of development in movements for social change:

- **Stage 1:** Isolated individuals make an inward decision to live “*divided no more*,” finding a center for their lives outside of institutions.
- **Stage 2:** These individuals begin to discover one another and form “*communities of congruence*” that offer mutual support and opportunities to develop a shared vision.

- **Stage 3:** These communities start *going public*, learning to convert their private concerns into public issues and receiving vital critiques in the process.
- **Stage 4:** A system of *alternative rewards* emerges to sustain the movement’s vision and to put pressure for change on the standard institutional reward system.

Palmer says that by understanding how movements work, each of us may discover that we are already engaged in a movement for educational reform. He believes that if one is on an inner journey, then one is on the threshold of real power—“the power of personal authenticity that, manifested in social movements, has driven real change in our own time.”

Conclusion

Palmer concluded by imploring each of us to ask ourselves, “Where am I today in terms of movements I care about?” This question, and the whole workshop, are still in my mind months later. If you are interested in learning more about Parker Palmer and his work, I strongly recommend *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher’s Life*. And if you are fortunate to work with interested, like-minded colleagues, I’d also suggest the companion guide for group study—*The Courage to Teach: A Guide for Reflection and Renewal*, by Rachel C. Livsey, which raises questions, examines ideas, explores images and suggests practices that emerge from the complex array of insights in Palmer’s book. Like the workshop, these books have changed the way I think about myself and the work I do. Check them out. You won’t be disappointed.



Rhonda Coats (State Board for Community and Technical Colleges), Terry Martin (Central Washington University) and Barbara Leigh Smith (The Evergreen State College) reflect on the nature of community.

Teaching Communities Within Learning Communities

Jean MacGregor
Director, National Learning Communities Project (FIPSE)

As I reflect on the diverse learning community initiatives established around the country—and particularly those in the Washington Center’s FIPSE-funded learning communities project—I have been struck by the intense and creative effort it takes just to put them in place. Small communities of students who share a substantial body of coursework; learning environments where understandings and meaning-making are collaboratively constructed; structures that intentionally develop connections between courses and disciplines—any one of these is no small feat. Yet the most powerful synergy between these critical learning community elements occurs when teaching teams work closely to create their own teaching communities even as they lead learning communities.

We may be in a common sea in higher education, but in truth, we are rarely in the same boat. Typically, we sail around solo. We have our own specializations, which we deepen and hone through our teaching, research, conversations and sometimes collaboration with counterparts who are sailing



Jean MacGregor, co-director of the National Learning Communities Project, listens attentively.

comparable boats at other campuses. Our work is to focus on our own crafts. Snooping around in others’ would be an unthinkable invasion of privacy. To be sure, we do a lot of greeting-in-passing. And we “raft up” for the occasional department or committee meeting. But we soon set sea again, holding to our courses with individual chart, tiller, and sail.

As they look back on their learning community teaching experiences, the faculty teams (or faculty/student affairs teams) who feel the most engaged speak repeatedly about their own learning and their own sense of community, beyond what they created for and with their students. They speak of the intense stimulation of discovering each others’ disciplines and teaching practices, the affirmation of reflecting together on students they had in common, and the deep satisfaction of learning to collaboratively create a curriculum. They reflect on a newfound trust and respect for their colleagues. In short, they’ve loved being in the same boat.

Carrying off a learning community program—or for that matter, any significant innovation in higher education—means that teams of individuals sail common crafts. For a sustained period of time—a quarter or a semester or even a year—teaching teams commit themselves to a course or program with a common group of students. Sailing together requires teamwork, collaborative skills and collective responsibility that are less familiar to those of us in the habit of sailing solo. Yet this kind of teaching can lead to the deep conversations we need to have about teaching and learning, and about our students, and it can plant vital seeds for institutional development and change.

The structure and the culture of our colleges and universities create

formidable forces that work against creating teaching communities. Our course-loading systems and reward systems generally ignore or undervalue team-teaching, or relegate it to the limbo of elective overload. Our individual units and home departments continuously reel us back in. Our competitive and individualistic training has often not prepared us for the public nature and the give-and-take of collaborative teaching.

To read any of the literature today on human learning is to be confronted with both the complexity and subtlety of the learning process, and the inefficiency of so much of our taken-for-granted curricular structures and pedagogies. To take in the daily news is to be reminded that twenty-first century challenges cannot be met with any single 19th century division of knowledge. And the task of teaching today’s undergraduates is daunting—made more so by the “lone sailor” structures and cultures that pervade our institutions. Yet we can begin to meet these challenges by creating bigger boats and sailing them with common groups of students. As faculty, staff or administrators, we need to seize every chance we can to create close-knit teaching communities. We need to argue for their value. We need to go public—not only with their potential power but with their actual impact—on students, on teachers, on curricula, and on our institutions. And we need to organize, to move these approaches out of the margins and into the mainstreams of our teaching lives. Creating “communities of shared practice”, as Parker Palmer calls them, is a tall order. But it is not an impossible one. In the bigger boats of teaching communities, we have the potential to take our students, our institutions and ourselves into deeper water and stronger currents.

Getting to the Heart of the Matter: Steps to Forming Coalitions

Emily Decker, Associate Director, The Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education



Rita Pougiales (The Evergreen State College), Lela Hamilton (WSU Extension), Susan Starbuck (Antioch University), Jim Harnish (North Seattle Community College) and Emily Decker (Washington Center) participate in a workshop on writing and drawing.

What follows is an outline of a workshop that focuses on powerful experiences of learning as a way of forming coalitions. Social movements are united by a vision of justice for all, and then within the movement, activists develop their own strategies for achieving the ends. Learning communities are a part of an educational reform movement that supports and encourages powerful learning experiences, deep and transformative learning experiences that lead us collectively in the direction of a more just society.

For many Washington Center newsletter readers, supporting learning communities is way to support this larger set of values. On many campuses, the issue emerging is how to garner more support for learning communities. One strategy is to teach more people about the practice of learning communities. Another strategy, which is the strategy of this workshop, is to focus on the values that give rise to learning communities, values which also give rise to other educational practices on campuses. Once we identify a common denominator based on creating possibilities for more opportunities for powerful learning, we open up the possibilities for meaningful coalition building.

To do this workshop, you will need at least an hour and a half. Read through the directions first, and then arrange

yourselves into groups of four or five. Someone needs to volunteer to be the timekeeper, and someone needs to be the reporter. Work your way through the four exercises, and then reconvene for a discussion of what you discovered. (For more information on designing conceptual workshops, read *Teaching with Your Mouth Shut*, by Don Finkel, 2000: Heinemann Press.)

1. Sit for a few minutes and think about powerful experiences of learning in your own life. Pick one to focus on and jot some notes. *What made the experience powerful for you? What were the actual conditions (where were you, what materials were available, how much time, etc.) of this experience? Who else was involved, and what roles did they play? What did you learn?* After you write, share your experiences within your group and listen for any common characteristics. (thinking/writing 5 minutes; sharing 10 minutes)
2. Next, consider these points: *Where and when and under what circumstances in your institution do students have experiences of learning like the ones you just discussed? Who is involved in creating and supporting these experiences? What are students learning?* Again, jot notes and then as you share them, listen for common characteristics. (thinking/writing 5 minutes; sharing 10 minutes)

3. *In an ideal world, what kind of experiences of learning would you like students at your school to have, and why?* Be as imaginative as you can be; describe what you would like students to have the opportunity to learn, how they might learn it, and with whom. Then shift your focus just a bit and also write about why you have chosen this experience. Listen for any commonalities as you share your ideas and your rationales with each other. (thinking/writing 10 minutes; sharing 10 minutes)

4. To practice putting theory into practice, choose one learning experience to focus on for this last task. It might be analogous to what you described in #1; it might be your example from #2; it might be what you dreamed up for #3. The only criteria for choosing the experience should be that you believe it could result in deep and powerful learning for students. Then, imagine that colleagues on your campus are interested in seeing that more students have this experience. No one is saying *no* to you. Whose help do you need to make this happen, and whose wisdom could you draw upon to make it powerful? Notice who you immediately turn to, and then imagine that part of your goal is to form alliances with colleagues you don't ordinarily work with. With that in mind, who else could become part of your circle? Make notes for yourself, and then as you share your thoughts with each other, ask yourselves what keeps you from forming these "coalitions." (thinking/writing 10 minutes; sharing 10 minutes)

When you have worked through these four steps, reconvene as a large group and focus on this last question. *Even if the chosen methods differ, who on your campus shares the value of supporting powerful learning for students? How might you build alliances that cross differences in practice and get at the heart of what you share in common?*

Change Agent

by Jacque Mott
William Rainey Harper College

When asked to speak about learning communities at the spring conference in Seattle, I knew it would be a daunting task. How does one articulate what one does on a day-to-day basis to effect change on campus and to help push the learning community program forward?

As coordinator of the learning communities program at William Rainey Harper College, I offer the following thoughts and ideas to those of you wanting to develop a similar program on your campus. Some suggestions may seem remedial while others may be viewed as more valuable, depending upon your own strengths and weaknesses at being change agents on your campus. Effective LC leadership, after all, is generally the result of a good match between the institution and the personal skills of the leader who is to effect change in that environment.

The environment at Harper College is steeped in political controversy – strong polarity exists between the faculty and the administration. The faculty have a very strong unionized senate, and the campus is run by a shared governance system of committees. This system of shared governance has worked both for and against the institutionalization of LCs on our campus. The LC effort began as a subcommittee of the Academic Affairs committee. Since each standing committee has membership from all areas of the campus, this affiliation gave us greater exposure to faculty and staff campus-wide, and the system gave us an established route on which to proceed. Our eventual existence as a

standing committee with a program solidified our acceptance by various institutional groups. It was extremely important for us to work through the Faculty Senate and to project the image of a faculty-driven initiative on our campus. The shared governance system positively assisted us in this process.

The shared governance system also drew attention to the differences in philosophies between the faculty and the administration. This system helps faculty feel empowered; they believe they have the right to create the learning environment. In addition, they believe that decisions should be made through consensus and cooperation. Most administrators approach the learning environment as a business with profit-making incentives. This results in rival positions and strong mistrust between faculty and administration. This mistrust leads to severe

turf guarding; there are only limited resources available and each group lays claim to these resources “for the good of the college.” Shared governance also has a very long decision-making process, which can effect your development efforts.

An effective change agent must maneuver between all positions presented on campus. Straddling this fence is difficult for many people. It requires a good deal of listening and careful analysis of when to act and when to remain silent. One of the hardest lessons that I learned was to not respond too quickly to every complaint. I found that people will often want to “vent” and are not really seeking advice or solutions. As a change agent, you are a sounding board more than a springboard. Many problems presented to you will simply reverberate away into nothing if you know when to act.



Jacque Mott (William Rainey Harper College) and Deborah Atamirano (Plattsburg University) chat before a session.

“
The power of successful collaboration in the creation
of a new program is often intoxicating and contagious.”

A Radical First Step

We began our learning community efforts by offering a 5-course, 5-faculty, fully-integrated learning community which represented a full semester load for the 100 students and 5 faculty members involved. In a format somewhat radical for most Harper faculty, students were given one grade for all five courses and were offered choices between several course mixes. For the next four years, the learning community program was tagged with this format.

Interestingly, this first effort received statewide recognition when it won the Illinois Community College Board Teaching Excellence Award. In retrospect, this probably gave a bit too much confidence to the LC development team and as it locked participating faculty into considering this format the ideal model.

A Magical 5th Year

By the fifth year of our existence, the LC “movement” finally began to take shape. Administration and deans were asked to assume a lower profile in their LC support as we gained the trust and ability to navigate among various other faculty groups. It was a time of resolution with the “old guard” faculty and increased involvement from the newly hired faculty. Rather than trying to prove that LCs were “better than” standard classroom teaching techniques, we presented LCs as “another positive alternative” to teaching. Our acceptance as a standing committee and a program with a budget and coordinator happened just as we entered the FIPSE project.

Profile of the Ideal Leader

Each institution must carefully examine the needs of its LC program and match the program needs with the skills of its coordinator or the collective personality of its leadership team. Below, I have listed specific traits which I feel are required of the Coordinator of LCs at Harper. This leadership profile is transferable to some other institutions as well, so glean those parts which work for you. The Learning Community Coordinator should:

- Be comfortable in developing and implementing a marketing plan
- Be flexible and open-minded
- Be able to juggle many tasks at once
- Enjoy the **process** of developing new initiatives (can live with taking two steps forward and one step back)
- Have the ability to work on a consensus basis and allow ample debate
- Have the ability to directly address rumors
- Be able to work with many different campus factions
- Promote an environment of mutual respect among co-workers
- Have the ability to focus goals into manageable tasks
- Be forward thinking

The Power of One, The Power of Many

It is essential to have a single person designated as Coordinator, Chair or “Work Horse” for the movement. The wrong person in this position could be harmful to the program development. This unique position requires a minimum of 6 contact hours (2 courses)

or reassigned time per semester/quarter to be able to complete the many tasks required. It is important for the program to have someone to centrally focus and direct the activities forward. It is equally important that campus personnel have a central point for information about LCs.

The central leader (coordinator) must believe in the committee structure and the process of consensus and team building. It is the committee or team leadership that will provide a stable and expansive base of policy and procedure for the program. The committee’s policies and procedures direct the coordinator. There must exist a balance between the team/committee and the coordinator, each relying on the other’s unique expertise. The larger committee structure allows for various campus perspectives to merge and be addressed. The coordinator has the ability to conduct one-on-one discussions and negotiations required in many situations. If the committee members are representatives from all the campus groups, they become effective change agents as they disseminate information about LCs across the campus. The power of successful collaboration in the creation of a new program is often intoxicating and contagious. In addition, a broad-base of leadership on the Committee is essential because it:

- Utilizes expertise from various areas on campus
- Allows many different faculty to develop leadership skills
- Maintains political centrality
- Increases communication with other campus committees

Personally, I think my socialist background from the 1960s helped prepare me for this collaborative work!

“
To be a successful change agent,
”
you must solicit support from many institutions on campus.

Impossible to do Alone

To be a successful change agent, you must solicit support from many institutions on campus. For example, counselors and student advisors are key to successful enrollments in LCs because they are the first contact with incoming students and can maintain direct communication with students on an ongoing basis. Also, the graphics department and campus print shop are essential to the timely production and distribution of your marketing materials.

At Rainey, other campus resources included our Dean's Counsel, who produced a set of guidelines for enrollment into LC's. These guidelines provided a unified model for all deans, department chairs, and coordinators to follow during registration periods. We also were fortunate to have the support of our Academic Vice President on a consistent basis from the beginning of our LC movement. Whenever possible, we kept other campus committees informed and involved in the LC movement. Our Student Success Committee decided to evaluate freshmen interest groups at other campuses and recommended their development at Harper. This activity excited a whole new group of individuals about the LC movement. Student Activities personnel helped to coordinate student-lead activities around LC courses and helped to communicate with the student body. They were invaluable at helping to mobilize the student population.

Sustaining Energy for the Program

Committee members and the coordinator must understand that institutionalizing LCs is a process which takes time. There will be one step backward for every two steps forward. Action-oriented committee members who can trust each other will help sustain energy for this work. Enlisting and engaging new people are good ways to generate new enthusiasm in the movement, as well as ensuring that committee members are rotated in and out of the fold on a yearly basis. Invite faculty who have taught in LCs to address the committee about their experiences. Set reasonable and attainable goals for each committee and subcommittee, but also strive to make sure that everyone involved in the movement looks forward to the next new project or goal. Don't be afraid if the committee must meet behind closed doors in order to deal with problems. An off-campus faculty development retreat gives faculty time to explore their collaborative efforts and to work together on planning new LCs.

Personal Tactics to Sustain Energy

As program coordinator, I focus on the immediate tasks at hand while maintaining a clear view of where the program should be going. It is important to always be aware and to seek out new people to recruit to the movement (faculty, staff and students) Because the enormity of these tasks can be overwhelming, I sometimes find it necessary and helpful to step back from the here-and-now and look at the big picture. Then, I review all my accomplishments to date and turn to my life partner (someone not in the LC movement) for feedback. It is very helpful to have developed a large enough network of colleagues on campus who I can turn to for assistance. Turning negatives into positives helps to maintain forward motion.

Six Lessons Learned about Organizational Change

Results of the National Learning Communities Dissemination Project

The six elements described below were identified through the Washington Center/FIPSE National Learning Communities Dissemination Project 1996-1999 as those elements most closely associated with the vitality of learning community efforts.

- 1. Institutional Readiness:** A critical mass of faculty and staff interested in the LC concept proved to be essential, including a leadership group (more than one person) ready to act as committed champions for the project and work collaboratively and share responsibility for LC implementation; general education approaches open to LC approaches; and leaders on campus who are directing their attention to first year learning and other curricular initiatives that support LC curricula.
- 2. Funding and Other Resources:** Clearly money matters, but money alone is not the key to developing strong learning communities. LC programs able to get grants to support their work have demonstrated the kind of institutional savvy that makes long-term change more likely. When campuses had funding of one sort or another, they found that it was most effectively directed at faculty curriculum planning and faculty development support.
- 3. Faculty Involvement and Faculty Support:** LC success depends in large part on faculty members' abilities to work together, practicing clear, consistent and frequent communication. Most campuses underinvest in faculty development, and the classic "one-workshop-at-a-time" model needs rethinking. Teaching collaboratively, teaching across disciplines, and forming a reflective community of faculty practitioners contradict traditional and deeply embedded ways of working within the academy.

“ Above and beyond the substantive material covered by these educational innovations, everyone involved comes away with a clearer sense of what it means to be a citizen of and contributor to a fundamental social form— a community. That these communities come as the result of successful collaboration in skeptical and sometimes unwelcoming institutional settings makes the achievement all that more satisfying. ”

Excerpted from: *From Innovation to Reform: Reflections on Case Studies of 19 Learning Community Initiatives*, by Larry Geri and Duke Kuehn, with Jean MacGregor, in *Strengthening Learning Communities: Case Studies from the National Learning Communities Dissemination Project*, 1999.

“ To begin to uncover what is wrong is to be able to see what could be right, and to do so by concentrating on what is, not what ought to be. It sometimes seems to me that we are more likely to be able to change something if we understand it very well than if we turn from it, imagine something quite different, and then have to begin afresh to figure out how to get there from here. Furthermore, I am always worried by efforts to ‘get there from here’ when the ‘there’ toward which we act is too clear to us, too developed. Such visions turn far too easily into prescriptive ends, in view of which present pressing realities—and too often real people—turn into no more than means.”

Elizabeth Minnich, *Transforming Knowledge*, 1990

4. Collaborative Leadership

Group: The development of LC’s is faster and easier when leadership for the effort spreads across disciplinary and administrative lines. Collaboration requires creative thinking, because it entails “understanding and sharing a vision, adopting a language and crossing boundaries that require significant personal change” (Geri, et al). This can be much harder than it appears to be in theory.

5. Assessment as a Strategy for Program Development:

Use assessment as a way to consistently focus attention on what is going on in the LC program, with the intent of strengthening practice all along the way. Schools developed performance measures that spoke to concerns that were meaningful for them; campuses used a mix of quantitative measures (retention, academic achievement) and qualitative measures (student satisfaction, sense of ‘connectedness’); and teams developed ways to listen to students at every point along the way. “Knowing in real time what is working and what isn’t greatly increases the likelihood a learning community program will thrive” (Geri, et al).

6. Commitment for the Long Haul:

“Persistence, patience and a commitment to a far-sighted vision are the most important factors in any successful venture.... Schools that see that the development of a learning community program is only the first step in the slow process of remaking both conversations and actual efforts about the way teaching and learning occur are likely to see results that carry them forward” (Geri, et al). Learning community projects tend to be messy, and like plants, LC programs won’t become deeply rooted quickly, no matter how skillful the gardener is. It helps to cultivate a long-term mindset.

This casebook is available for purchase through The Evergreen State College Bookstore. It contains the full text of this article plus case studies of the twenty-one participating campuses. Please call (360) 866-6000, ext. 5300 for information.



Laura Rendón, University of Arizona

Invocation

Laura Rendón

In this century and in any century our deepest hope, our most tender prayer, is that we learn to listen. May we listen to one another in openness and mercy, may we listen to plants and animals in wonder and respect. May we listen to our own hearts in love and forgiveness, may we listen to our own higher power in quietness and awe, and in this listening, which is boundless in its beauty, may we find the wisdom to cooperate with the healing spirit, a divine spirit, who beckons us into peace and community and creativity. We do not ask for a perfect world, but we do ask for a better world. We ask for deep listening.

Academics of the Heart

Laura Rendón

When faculty are asked to talk about their experience in higher education, they invariably express concerns about lack of purpose and meaning. When probed, they talk about conflict, fragmentation, stress, overworked lives, racism, sexism, and homophobia, as well as a sense of loneliness and isolation.

Higher education is in need of healing. It is in need of integration. It is in need of a new connected and humanistic model of teaching, learning, research, leadership, and community.

I have decided to devote the next phase of my academic career to developing a model that will re-conceptualize the traditions that have worked against community, the balance of reason and spirit, and the education of the whole person in higher education. I call this model "Academics of the Heart."

To put forth the philosophical underpinnings of what I call "Academics of the Heart," I turn to my past, to the indigenous people of Mexico, to the Aztec culture. The Aztecs believed that the only truth on earth was poetic and artistic creation, as embodied in what they called *flor y canto*, flower and song. In essence, *flor y canto* was an education of the heart. The Aztecs believed that all beautiful ideas were like flowers and songs, and that brilliant people had deified hearts and were in touch with the divine. How else could they be so smart?

The philosophical essence of *flor y canto* can be used to construct the model of Academics of the Heart. Academics of the Heart has five features. Each of these features is unique and plays its own role in the teaching and learning process.

The first feature is to create a learning environment that engages the heart as well as the intellect. This means creating learning environments where students can engage in academic analyses of issues, as well as reflect on how issues affect their lives.

The second feature is to make teaching and learning a relationship-centered process. The term, "relationship centered" comes from a concept that is being advanced in the health care profession called "relationship-centered care." In this relational model healers enter into relationships with patients, communities, and colleagues in order to provide a holistic approach to health care. Like relationship-centered care, Academics of the Heart is about connection and community. It is about aligning faculty with students and bringing this relationship to full consciousness. In relationship-centered teaching and learning, a validating in- and out- of class environment is created and fostered.

A third feature of Academics of the Heart is to honor and respect diverse ways of knowing. In our curriculum we need to accommodate multiple views of reality, including ancestral teachings, personal experiences, quantitative and qualitative research, spiritual traditions, dreams, as well as the experiences of people of color, women and men, gay, lesbian and bisexual people.

A fourth feature of Academics of the Heart is to attend to matters of difference, as well as togetherness, and to know that life requires honoring both of these great needs.

A fifth feature of Academics of the Heart is to engage in contemplative practice. Academics of the Heart begins not with what we do for others; it begins with what we do for ourselves. We cannot engage the hearts of our students without knowing how to engage our own hearts. WE must find ways to make contemplative practice and reflection for both faculty and students a part of the mainstream agenda of teaching, learning, research and practice.

Our hearts are calling to us. It is time to answer the calling to restore *flor y canto* in higher education.

Laura Rendón is a professor of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Arizona State University. She is the Veffie Milstead Jones Endowed Professor at California State University, Long Beach for the academic year 1999-2000. As a Fetzer Institute Fellow, she is one of 12 individuals participating in a program designed to develop and sustain the capacity of individuals to inform their work through the "inner life" of mind and spirit and the "outer life" of action and service. Her publications and presentations include topics of diversity, community college students, transfer and retention of minority students. She was one of two keynote speakers at the Washington Center's Annual Conference in May 1999.

Learning from Messiness

Gary Daynes
Brigham Young University

Julie Thomas added my Honors World History class a week into the semester. She and a dozen other students were refugees from a canceled section of the same class. I added them to the roster even though the class was already full. The university had treated them unfairly by canceling a required General Education class, so it seemed the decent thing to do. Plus, I figured that a group of 50 students meeting in an amphitheater-style classroom would not be hurt by the presence of a few more people. I reminded them that they were responsible for their own success, paired each one up with a critique partner, and dove into the material.

Many of the new students distinguished themselves in class. Julie did not. She did not turn in three assignments. Her test scores never rose above a “B”. She finished her final in 40 minutes (the rest of the class took an hour or more), slunk to the front of the room, dropped her blue book on the table, and left. I gave her the lowest class participation score of the semester. Her grade for the semester was barely a “C”. I remember thinking in spite of myself that Julie had earned the perfect grade—low enough to show her my displeasure, low enough to keep the class GPA off the grade inflation radar, but high enough that she would not have to repeat the class, or come back and complain. It was morally unambiguous, intellectually fair, and educationally efficient. I figured it to be a clean break.

Higher education is full of clean breaks. Semesters end, grades come in, and students shuffle to new classes like dancers in a Jane Austin parlor. Departments and colleges divide up the known world into discrete chunks. The two biggest university ceremonies—orientation and graduation—are at their cores about making breaks. Orientation lets students know that they have left home and high school for college. (I was just asked to welcome new students to my campus this fall. The orientation committee told me to remind students that “this isn’t high school.”) Graduation sends them off to make their way in the world.

These structural breaks have their behavioral counterparts. Students cultivate cool demeanors, professors practice irony. Distance is the official face of university life—one follows procedures, sits on committees, submits paperwork, evaluates tests according to impersonal criteria. Fun, passion, anger, and sadness each have their place, but it is separate and controlled—the athletic



Joye Hardiman and Willie Parsons greet guests arriving at The Evergreen State College-Tacoma campus for an in-depth visit.

“ Interdisciplinary programs are proliferating, and in the classroom, many faculty and students have stopped leaving their convictions and emotions at the door. ”

program, campus clubs, parties, religious groups. Icy stares meet the rare tirade at faculty meetings, passionately held ideas win only anxious titters in class.

I know that I have written nothing new. Teachers, scholars, and students have all attacked the compartmentalization that goes with mainstream higher education. And the responses have been forceful. Interdisciplinary programs are proliferating, and in the classroom, many faculty and students have stopped leaving their convictions and emotions at the door. If the clean break is the key characteristic of mainstream higher education, then wholeness is its main competitor. Campus life is taking the form of the network or the web. Students work in teams, classes sit in circles and form communities. But as different as the “network” is from the bureaucratic model of the university, they share a central characteristic—the desire for neatness. In a network, everything fits together into a neat package. There are no breaks in the circle. In that way, it is as artificial as

the model it tries to supplant. I am a believer in wholeness as an educational tool. I teach at a university with a strong Christian commitment where classes sometimes open with prayer and there are no clear boundaries between secular and spiritual. The university has a huge learning communities program where freshmen live together, take classes together, and attend church together. The Faculty Center promotes innovative pedagogy and we have a new center to support community service-learning. One of the reasons I welcomed 13 extra students to my class was that my TA and I had lots of experience working with small groups inside larger ones and helping students collaborate with each other to learn. But wholeness has its faults. It may have been my commitment to wholeness that made me want a clean break with Julie Thomas. She had managed to slip out of the web, to evade our best efforts to fit her into the community. And so I hoped that her path would lead away from me.

I write that last sentence with embarrassment. It is in part theoretical embarrassment, since I let an educational model dictate my response to a student. But it is also real embarrassment brought on by concrete, messy experience. Three weeks after the semester ended, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints asked me to serve as a bishop to one of 200 student congregations at BYU. (A bishop is the equivalent of a pastor, but bishops serve without pay and keep their regular jobs). The congregation’s membership was fluid. As many as 90% of the students moved out of the condominium complex where my congregation was based each semester. During the break between summer and fall semester, Julie Thomas moved in.

Julie’s move, like her presence in my class, was a matter of chance. Our first meeting was a bit uncomfortable. I was surprised to see her, and then embarrassed for not having put in a more solid effort to help her in my class. She was ashamed at not having worked harder.



Judith Summerfield (Queens College) and Jacinta McCoy (The Evergreen State College) share lunch and conversation at The Evergreen State College-Tacoma Campus.

“Education demands humility. If a significant portion of a person’s life comes in response to chance, then educators and administrators must accept that they and their programs cannot provide solutions, only efforts toward solutions.”

But as we spent more time together the discomfort fell away. We spoke together often, though never about the class. I asked her to volunteer at church, and she did, well. She finished her degree in history, met a young man who was visiting my congregation and fell in love. Their wedding was a few weeks ago.

I do not tell Julie’s story to make the point that things work out fine in the end. After all, the “C” she got in my class may still hold her back, as may the habits that led to her grade. Nor do I tell it to point out how linking the social and educational parts of college helps ensure successful students, for in this case the links were no more or less effective than the gaps. I tell it because my time with Julie has reminded me of some important truths about education.

Education is messy. The bits of chance that brought Julie to my class, and then brought us to the same congregation, are duplicated in every life. All of the planning that goes into compartmentalizing or connecting students cannot predict or replace

happenstance. Nor should it, for the costs (absolute impersonality on the one hand, absolute intrusiveness on the other) are far higher than the value they might bring.

Education demands humility. If a significant portion of a person’s life comes in response to chance, then educators and administrators must accept that they and their programs cannot provide solutions, only efforts toward solutions. Making efforts takes more time than imposing solutions. But it also teaches better virtues—experimentation and patience instead of rigidity and anxiety.

Education provides concrete opportunity. We teach in a given setting with a particular group of students. We have to respond to those circumstances, not some others we (or others) may prefer. This is not to say we should abandon efforts to reform the classroom. But efforts that do not grow out of and return to our particular circumstances will founder the very next time Julie Thomas comes along.

Gary Daynes is an assistant professor of History at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah.



Toiya Jist (The Evergreen State College-Tacoma) and Laurie Rodgers (The Evergreen State College-Tacoma) make sure that the group visit to their campus is fruitful for all.

In Your Face:

Five Tips for More Effective Learning Communities on Culture and Race

Vincent F. A. Golphin
St. John Fisher College

A white, female colleague at a largely white, private college was nearly trembling as she handed me an essay written by a young woman in her learning community in which one of the classes dealt with race. The student, also a white female, openly expressed bitter antipathy toward the two or three black students in the class. In fact, the young woman said she wanted to kill them. “What should I do?” the teacher asked.

The instructor was not as concerned about how to deal with the student as she was about how to deal with her co-teachers. The white, male, primary instructor of the course—which was focused on race—wanted to ignore the angst-ridden confession. The other teachers in the LC were of like mind. And what effect might a public discussion of such bitter feelings have on the black students themselves, on the young woman, or on the entire class?

My colleague’s question was straightforward: should she push her partners, risking alienation and disruption among the team, or should she back off? She did not want to play “the bitch.” Basically, she respected the other teachers. Like many professors, particularly at smaller schools, she wanted to keep the peace. But at the same time, she was surprised, outraged and offended not only by the student’s admission (which she saw as a cry for help) but also by her colleagues’ lack of concern. Her instincts prodded her to confront the festering racism. After all, one of the LC’s aims was to teach *about* racism.

It’s not easy to maximize an LC’s potential for meaningful discussion of cultural or racial issues if you don’t encourage candor and examination. A variety of sources—including Edgar Dale’s “cone of experience”—indicate students learn best when they speak and act. LCs limited to reading,

reflection and writing about such topics exist. Some even do a relatively good job. But, overall they fall short of a learning community’s highest standard.

That said, it must be admitted that choices of how far to take student interaction are not easy. It is hard for black and white students to be open, honest and confrontational on racial and cultural issues; most adults, including many teachers, wince at the notion of such dialogue. The reason is fear.

Once, in a class I teach as part of a Learning Community, an African-American student became so angry he wanted to punch me in the mouth. We were in an older black man/younger black man verbal confrontation about his future. The 20-year-old male, emboldened by the altruism and idealism typical of his age, announced his plans to be a prison social worker as a means to foment freedom and



Diane Gillespie (UW-Bothell) and George Woods (UW-Bothell) open a workshop on using case stories about critical moments in students’ lives to further conversations about agency, resilience and inclusivity.

“ . . . it must be admitted that choices of how far to take student interaction are not easy.

It is hard for black and white students to be open, honest and confrontational on racial and cultural issues . . . ”

development among the black inmate population. He was offended and outraged at my response that he'd most likely end up “a shill for The Man.” Raised in a middle class, suburban environment, the young man said he saw himself garnering money and success in the chosen career. The more I asked questions—just questions, I purposely made no statements—about how he intended to succeed when his goals were incompatible with the system he sought to serve, the more he began to seethe. In his view, he was under bitter attack, and helpless.

While he and other black students in the class relished assaults on white students' thoughts and attitudes (“It's cool when a 'brother' sticks it to 'whitey' 'cause most days, white folks do that to us.”), this young man clearly didn't like being in the hot seat himself. With his eyes, he asked, “You're doing this to me in front of them?” He was avoiding the discussion.

“That's all right, man,” he said. “You know everything.” That was my signal to back off. I did not. Such a move would have given the African-American student a privilege to hide from self-examination of attitudes and behaviors not accorded to the whites in the class. I pressed, because his growth as a person depended on an honest intellectual confrontation of the realities many African-Americans face in trying to introduce their cultural viewpoints into a white, male-dominated social structure.

He looked down at the desk; refused eye contact. That was the second signal.

His responses to my queries became faint. Some, he refused to answer. His breathing rate increased. He mumbled inaudible side comments. That was the third sign. The young man threw up a wall. He adopted what Richard Majors and Janet Mancini Billson dub a “cool

pose” to keep his sense of pride, dignity and respect. (As *Cool Pose: The Dilemmas of Black Manhood in America* explains, “Cool pose has become an integral thread in the fabric of black-black and black-white relationships.... Being cool enhances the black man's pride and character, helps him cope with conflict and anxiety, and paves an avenue for expressiveness ... [it] furnishes the black male with a sense of control, inner strength, balance, stability, confidence, and security.”)

Eventually, I gave him a way out of the confrontation because we had gone as far as possible in a multiracial setting. We could not comfortably have a black-on-black conversation without the non-African-Americans zoning out or feeling left out. It was a judgment call, but to that extent, the young black man's growth was inhibited.



Woods and Gillespie have worked collaboratively to make the Critical Moments approach accessible to teams at all campuses.

“
Race-based LCs that promote intercultural sensitivity
could be an ideal alternative.

Students of one race could speak candidly with instructors
”
who share a similar background.

The learning community is a great vehicle for exploring academic subjects. It allows the flexibility to combine affective and cognitive teaching methods. Classrooms can be opened to more wide-ranging discussions. In many ways, LCs provide students with far more support and security from peers and instructors than traditional classrooms and pedagogy. Yet, most LC classes get ticklish when it comes to the study of cultures or race.

Many white students have told me they are often afraid to open up about race and cultural issues because they “don’t want to sound stupid” in front of other whites. When non-whites are in the room the hesitance ratchets up a notch. They don’t want to be labeled racists or bigots, or to appear naive. Sometimes professors retard discussions. They keep exchanges on a purely intellectual level to maintain class morale and stability. Some administrations only tolerate such courses as long as they don’t stir controversy or complaints. Harsh verbal confrontations and fistfights might rank high on the list of cautions.

White students need to be encouraged toward self-examination as they learn more about U.S. social, political, economic and historical realities. It keeps them from being deceived by the subtle white supremacy found in radio and television sound bites. Forced to face the realities behind many of the lies that support racism, the students can demythologize their realities. For example, they might understand that poverty is more the result of social engineering than genetic inferiority. They can begin to discover that differences in attitudes, language or behavior are not bad.

Non-white students need the same encouragement, but even more support, because often, the subliminal message in institutions of higher learning is that white society is right and everything about non-white society is wrong. They need to be allowed more room to express their distinctiveness. They need classes where they can interact with significant “experts” who look and act like them. That happens rarely, which is why many non-white students sit quietly, absentmindedly, or dodge

classes where they know race might be discussed. A spectacularly articulate and perceptive black female student once told me, “I don’t want to make it any harder on myself around here.”

Race-based LCs that promote intercultural sensitivity could be an ideal alternative. Students of one race could speak candidly with instructors who share a similar background. Such groups might allow students to mature in a more nurturing environment before having to face inter-group confrontations. In any case, it is imperative that young adults of different racial and ethnic backgrounds give serious consideration to race and culture because those will be the key social factors in the next century.

Race-based LCs are not likely to exist because:

- Administrators would not consider such smaller, more exclusive groups, to be cost-effective.
- They would see them as academically counter-productive.
- The concept smacks too much of

“
To grow as individuals on issues related to race
and culture, students need a space
where they can share honestly and comfortably
and that protects them psychologically.”

apartheid. Most schools want to avoid even the appearance of formal racial isolation, although they tolerate it informally every day.

But that does not mean there is nothing that can't be done. Teachers who see similar problems in LCs on race and culture and want to do something can:

- *Encounter themselves.* Be prepared to do what they ask of the students— openly and honestly share fears, emotions and perceptions on issues of culture and race. If they hide behind enlightened, intellectual platitudes to save face, the students will do the same.
- *Encourage students to present and support their views.* Students who see the aim of a course as propaganda become resistant, as well they should. Learning is a search for truth. Students who care enough to research materials that provide a perspective other than that of the instructor become co-educators. That is the ideal of student-centered instruction.

- *Seek authorities from other backgrounds.* Give students a chance to see people of other races and genders in the “expert” role. This takes the burden to speak out off the backs of non-white students and empowers the victims of racism to speak for themselves.
- *De-stigmatize labels.* Most students say they think being called a racist, bigot or naive is the worst thing in the world. They see it as a permanent loss of grace. It is not. Help them understand that the views expressed today can change tomorrow.
- *Offer hope.* Discussions of racism stir a guilt that is too heavy for most students to bear. They need to see hope for redemption. White and non-white students often complain that talk about race is a waste, because “people will always be racist.” Tap into their idealism. Ask them if they want to be, or want their children to be, that kind of person. Most students will say no.

That is the moment to explain that only openness and honesty in their conversations can help defeat racism.

To grow as individuals on issues related to race and culture, students need a space where they can share honestly and comfortably and that protects them psychologically. It would be great if that could be done in a multicultural classroom. Often it cannot. The problem is that most white and non-white youths have different issues and different styles in approaching solutions. Also, many LCs and teachers are not adequately equipped to accept them.

My white female colleague chose not to disrupt her LC. She may have dealt privately with the disturbed student. I don't know. The black male student and I became closer. We carried the discussion outside of class, where we could talk on a more “black” level. He's adopted me as a sort of mentor.

Learning Communities and Technology: The Diagnostic Dialectic

by Steve Quinn, Olympic College

In the final plenary session of the May Learning Communities Conference in Seattle, several important questions were raised. There was the shared observation that many current “hot topics”—problem-based and outcomes-based learning and assessment, for example—were notable in their absence. Also, the make-up of the participant group was less diverse and inclusive than it might have been. Finally, there was the relative absence of “technology-talk” at this conference as compared to other recent conferences we had attended. Someone asked the question, *Why was technology not discussed more?* In the following paragraphs I will offer my own response.

Why was technology *not* discussed more? As the only representative of my college attending the conference, I grappled with that point on my drive home, so that I might offer an explanation to my colleagues along with my own observations.

But the question begat more questions.

Is the learning community a technology? The answer must be yes. A learning community can be a deliberate application of knowledge and resources to solve a problem or respond to a need. It is a tool that helps to answer to the question, *How will we do what we do?*

Is the learning community something more—something other than a technology? Also yes. It represents a philosophy, a creed, a line of inquiry. It implies a deeper question, asking, *What is it that we do, anyway?*

Yes, a learning community is both a technology *and* a philosophy.

With this in mind, then, how would I address the parting question of the conference? *Why was technology not discussed more?* Four possible answers came to mind.

My first thought was that the dual personality of the learning community implies an either/or relationship. A choice was made, which I had no trouble defending. The learning community represents a step back from survival skills in order to reexamine and reaffirm the source and goal of our activities. The computer, too, and the larger issue of technology and learning, has caused many to take similar steps. I could even argue that technology conversations are not as “important” as philosophy conversations. If the learning community was introduced to the mainstream as a technology, then before it was even understood it would be assessed and compared with other tools, engineered, tweaked, replicated, and dissected. It would be applied to

both solve and invent instructional problems, and it would compete with other tools in the box. It would spawn a jargon, become a commodity, inspire a fashion, and take its place on the shelf, somewhere between the Swiss Army Knife and the Pet Rock.

But choices can be divisive. There was some indication at the conference that others might have chosen differently. Either/or forces the pragmatist and the idealist to part ways, one resigned to incremental repair, the other to principled death and resurrection. The first is accused of alignment with the status-quo, the latter of endless pontification. Still others, the peace-makers, suggest various forms of compromise: the ideal, dressed in the trappings of Wall Street, and the algorithm, disguised as a poem. Perhaps there is a way to avoid choosing.

A second answer was that we *did* discuss technology, but it was not separated out and identified as such, because that is not true to the complex and paradoxical nature of the subject. The paradox, from this perspective, is a little like salad dressing. We all recognize that both oil and vinegar must be present. Though they cannot mix, and though some of us are tempted to emphasize one over the other, it is not constructive to dwell on their independent attributes as if they could still be salad dressing once separated. Think of it as stealth technology. Philosophy and technique are the irreconcilable twin personalities of the learning community, and when one is discussed, the other is there as well, albeit between the lines. As one lunch companion explained, assessment and technique are the underwear of the learning community, conceded requirements but not favorite items of discourse.

“The computer, first a tool, then a technique,
must also inform and cause us to question
philosophical decisions if it is taken seriously.”

I had a problem with this answer as well, because as I practiced representing it to my colleagues at home I found that it sounded much like no answer at all. “Trust me,” I would say, attempting a Zen smile, “it is the technology of a tree falling alone in the forest.”

A third relational paradigm between the art and craft of the learning community, also well represented at the conference, was that of developmental stages. Movements and innovations, this answer goes, must begin as ideas, and then develop into actions. Technology was not discussed more because learning communities are relatively young. Based on a variety of starting times and paces of development, the mature programs or practitioners at the conference discussed technique and evidence, while the younger or less experienced ones discussed passion and rationale.

This is not the only view of development, however. Some might suggest that technique must be mastered before philosophical debate is undertaken, others that it is the implementation of a technology that gives rise to questions of theory and principle. And even if consensus could be reached on the stages of development, where along it are we?

At the conference I saw evidence supporting all these possible relationships between the technology and the philosophy of the learning community. As I reflect, I believe our characterization of the relationship between these two definitions of learning communities is critical for determining our vision, our voice, and our success in communicating and realizing our dreams. That an ongoing relationship exists is clear, and not just for the learning community. The computer, first a tool, then a technique, must also inform and cause us to question philosophical decisions if it is taken seriously. I believe this is

the case for all important techniques, for they change what is possible, and challenge the imagination and resolve. Likewise, philosophical movements and ideals, like diversity, must build a language and create necessary tools, for their movement must be into the realm of technique if they are to become real.

A fourth possible answer to the original question, *Why was technology not discussed more?*, was that it should have been...because we want to know learning communities better. One aspect of my job is helping students learn about the diagnosis of complex systems. The word diagnosis contains two elements: *DIA* is through or thorough, and *GNOSIS* is to know. Diagnosis implies both immersion and perspective. I have tried to teach this process and the relationship between these elements as paradoxical, problematic, and progressive, but when I watch myself practicing it, I don't see any of that. I see boxing.

I have never been closer to a boxing ring, or seen more of one, than was afforded by a fraction of the *Rocky* saga, but the analogy is the best one I have. One faint hope of this writing is that a better analogy may be offered to me in reply. The boxer, it appears (of the diagnostician I am more certain), must continually both plan and react, and must alternate between engagement and disengagement, action and assessment, perspective and immersion. The bout cannot be fought from a distance, or won without an occasional step back to look around.

The analogy clearly has limits, but the picture works for me: the dance in and back out, responsive, mindful, intense, yet not choreographed or in unison, or generally very pretty to watch. This is not a paradox, but a dialogue. We are not choosing between

idealism and practicality. It is senseless to argue the case, for they are not in conflict. And when I attempt to convey my enthusiasm to my friends I need not lay it out as a logical or linear experience, but simply invite them into the ring, and warn them to keep on their toes.

This diagnostic dialectic between immersion and perspective, technique and faith, may apply to all serious issues in instruction. Technology both asks for and is requested by philosophy, not only at this conference on learning communities, but also at those concerned with electronic media, problem-based instruction, assessment, learning outcomes, and diversity. It seems important to me as we invite others to join in these conversations that we keep the relationships clear in our language and our methods. We do not need to mix assessment and passionate practice like salad dressing, nor should we choose between them. One is not an element or precursor or superstructure of the other. The relationship is dynamic and recursive, the roles shift and dance, and both are essential.

I believe that both of these elements were present at the conference, but perhaps not in equal measure. One suggestion is that a specific effort be made at the conference to integrate the tools and principles of the learning community with other tools and perspectives. Each conference on each of the various topics and buzzwords should have something to do with art, something to do with craft, and an element of integration into a larger whole. I look forward to merging these energies and questions from all important tools and elements of faith. And, until further notice, when I think of this conference, I will picture us all wearing big, padded gloves.

Learning Community Assessment Studies: What the Washington Center Resources Show

by Jerri Lindblad, Frederick Community College

For the past twenty years, The Evergreen State College's Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education has nurtured and collected information on Learning Communities (LCs). This review discusses eleven years (1988-1999) of assessment studies from that collection.

The 63 studies were analyzed by type (first year interest group, link, cluster, coordinated studies, and multitype) and cohort (students, faculty, administrators). They vary widely in purpose, content, number, and size. The variety concretely illustrates the need for more systematic qualitative and quantitative research and assessment of learning communities. Thus, this article is not a definitive review of the rigorous research on LCs. More research needs to be done for that to be accomplished. This review, a reflection of the history and state of the learning community movement, reports what we currently know.

We know that, overall, learning community students complete courses and persist at a higher rate than students not in learning communities. First-year interest group (FIG) students complete courses and earn more credits than non-FIG students, and their persistence ranges from being mixed to being significantly higher than that of their counterparts. Students in links, on the other hand, have slightly higher retention and consistently higher persistence rates than non-link students. Although cluster students earn credits at only a slightly higher rate than non-cluster students, they persist and graduate at significantly higher rates. Coordinated studies students complete courses and earn credits at a significantly higher rate than controls and persist at a high rate; however, their graduation rates are only slightly higher than their counterparts.

Research studies in areas of grade point average, intellectual development, critical thinking, and learning gain indicate that learning community students generally succeed academically at a higher rate than non-learning community students. We know that LC student GPAs are generally comparable to, or higher than, those of their counterparts. The results of studies using the Measure of Intellectual Development (MID) agree that learning community students make significant intellectual gains. In fact, by the end of a LC experience, more than half of the students advance one-third position or more. If we also consider the increase in critical thinking shown in other studies, we can see that LC students increase in cognitive complexity at a faster rate than students in stand-alone classes or in nationally normed samples.

Student surveys, interviews, and self-assessment essays tell us repeatedly that learning community students perceive themselves as making high to significant gains in learning. Some of those gains are in skills; others are in content. However, the greatest gain that students report is in their ability to see other points of view and to analyze and integrate ideas.

One of the strengths of learning communities is that they are structured to reach and teach all kinds and levels of student learning. Many learning community students come into post-secondary institutions with lower academic index scores than the class as a whole; soon, though, their grade deciles are similar to non-LC students and, thus, quite different from their high school scores. Learning communities academically benefit students at risk, under-represented students, and students who generally make Cs and Ds.



Vince Tinto (Syracuse University) and Bill Moore (State Board for Community and Technical Colleges) share a moment between sessions to talk about assessment issues.

We know more about the socialization aspect of learning community students than we know of any other aspect of their college experience. And the information shows us that, in general, learning community students bond to their collegiate institution and develop into actualized learners who are community-minded individuals with the citizenship skills needed for life in a democracy.

Clusters and FIG studies report that LC students appreciate their collegiate institution, would choose it again, and are more engaged in the life of the institution than non-LC students. LC students also experience increased motivation and become more aware of their own strengths and limitations than non-LC students. Self-awareness increases confidence, leads students to speak in their own 'voice,' assists students in understanding their motivation and increases their motivation to a degree. Frequently during this process, LC students recognize and accept responsibility for being active in their own learning.

Most importantly, LCs also support the infusion of pluralism by developing student sensitivity to and respect for other points of view, other philosophies, other cultures, other people. Multicultural and gender sensitivities are a beginning; LC students also learn to deal comfortably with different groups of people, as well as value their life experiences and development. Minorities who participate in learning communities report a significantly high comfort level in such settings. For them, LCs are significantly positive experiences.

Learning community faculty as a group more strongly identify themselves as teachers than as experts in specialized disciplines. Learning communities are personally, socially, and professionally beneficial to most faculty at a high to significantly high level. Faculty report high rates for the opportunity to work with peers, gain inspiration, and rejuvenate themselves (especially senior faculty, who comprise the majority of learning community teachers). Even faculty that might not be perceived as having "learned anything" and having been "difficult to work with" see themselves as benefiting from the experience. Faculty often also report fatigue and a sense of depression as they near the end of a collaboration and return to a more isolated existence in the stand alone class. They want to continue to teach in LC environments.

This review reveals that we do know quite a bit about learning community students and that we have some information about faculty learning community experiences. But it also sheds light on several areas in which more study and research are needed:

1. We know very little about the effects of learning community work on transfer students, alumni, and administrators.
2. We need more studies and more rigorous data on FIGs, Links, and Clusters. Half of the 63 studies in this review focus on coordinated studies students and faculty.
3. We need more data on under-represented students. Most diversity information here is based on small numbers from colleges and universities in which under-represented groups are not the majority.
4. We need to know more about process—what is occurring inside a learning community experience that brings about intended and unintended results.
5. We need more carefully planned studies that portray the spectrum. Some of these studies ignore or fail to address problems.
6. We need to train/re-train LC faculty in the techniques of qualitative and quantitative research, so that they, too, can perceive and report their experience with "disinterested subjectivity."
7. We need cost-benefit studies of learning communities that include the cost of student withdrawals and suspensions, of not having students retained, of not having students persist.
8. We need to make certain that researchers have the time and space to assess and improve their work professionally, to continue meaningful viability in an era of performance-based funding. Otherwise, the learning community movement will become yet another higher education fad.



Robin Jeffers (Bellevue Community College) leads a session on assessing intellectual development through writing in the context of learning communities.

Appreciation of Community and Friendship

by Nel Hellenberg, Carolyn Stephens, Tom Versteeg
Spokane Falls Community College

Between Spring Quarter 1997 and Spring Quarter 1999, Spokane Falls Community College faculty engaged in a collaborative qualitative assessment of their learning communities. Their work is carefully documented in a bound volume entitled *The Value of Connection: An Assessment of Learning Communities at Spokane Falls Community College*. Following is an excerpt from their project conclusions.

Both faculty and students highlighted the rich aspect of community they experienced in a learning community. An environment that blended academic and social life, a warmth of atmosphere and a sense of trust among peers, a high level of student participation (often in groups), and the opportunity to get to know others were topics addressed by both faculty and students.

It was somewhat different, however, for faculty than for students. Respecting the skills and performance of a colleague, being a mentor or (on the other hand) having a senior colleague as a mentor, feeling rejuvenated and even a little competition to reach for high standards in teaching, as well as simply enjoying the socializing among colleagues, were aspects faculty appreciated.

For students there was a sense of belonging to a team or group, of making valuable contributions, of being heard and appreciated, of enjoying the social interaction, and of being successful in an academic community. Learning communities offered faculty and students a nice integration of those desirable social experiences with enriched academic experiences.

Faculty and students alike recognized and discussed the depth of learning typically associated with these LC classrooms. Students claimed significant intellectual gains that included basic study skills and strategies, persistence and commitment to learning, the ability to read and discuss topics in depth, as well as the ability to draw conclusions and argue points of view. Students claimed they learned to make connections between and among disciplines. The enjoyment of learning was a common point of discussion. Having taken ownership of their own learning, many students felt confident in themselves as learners.

The faculty confirmed these intellectual gains, claiming students illustrated this growth when observed in group discussions as well as when assessed by means of written performance evaluations. Many faculty suggested that this depth of learning was experienced universally—by a full range of learners—from those entering with low asset scores, to average as well as more advanced learners.



Many conference sessions allowed participants to shape their own learning through small group conversations.

What I Saw, What I Heard, What I Didn't Hear: Comments from the Closing Plenary Session

by Rhonda Coats
State Board for Community and Technical Colleges

As someone whose job at the LC Conference was to notice what I saw, what I heard and what I didn't hear, I have a number of interesting observations to share.

The first was the enthusiasm at the conference. I haven't been to many conferences where people appeared to be so deeply engaged. LC Conference participants believe in learning communities and like them. They talked about them, explored them, took their time with them..... and I think this was critical to learning, to take the time to talk about and understand what it is we are all trying in some way to do.

I noticed that people asked questions. They inquired about how others "do it" and their schools, and they made comparisons and took notes. What that told me was that none of us is sure we have the one right answer, and this is an evolving process. Learning is going on. We are modeling the behaviors we want our students to exhibit!

I also noticed that people were taking risks. Parker Palmer talked about his depression. Laura Rendon said, "I am going to tell you all something that you might not agree with." That kind of risk-taking made my heart race. What it did for all of us, I believe, was make us much more connected as a group.

I heard three words used over and over: connections, relationships, and intent. With the word "connections" we were addressing how all of the important components work—and stick—together. Can we look at something in isolation by itself and analyze it, or do we have to look at how it is connected to other things? And what are the relationships implicit in

this connectedness? It is the relationships—whether they are faculty to faculty, student to student, faculty to student, or faculty and students' relationships to issues—that are at the heart of learning. Our work in learning communities with relationships and connections is a natural fit with who we are as people. How do we keep ourselves connected to our students and how do we keep them connected to the much larger picture? How do we set our values and beliefs around connectedness and relationships?

Intent is a powerful word. We need to start doing things intentionally and not by chance. Consider the structures we have in our institutions. What structures keep us from doing learning communities within the institution? Do we intentionally reinforce old structures that we know and feel safe with? Do we intentionally do things to put barriers in front of students? Do we intentionally invite people to the table?

Looking on the other side of the coin, there was much at the conference that I didn't see—specifically, diversity. Parker talked about inviting "the grandmothers" to the table. It made me stop and think, well, who *are* "the grandmothers" we have not invited to the LC table?

Ted Marchese observed that this was a pretty "white" conference. I agreed with him. Was that a sign that we needed to invite more people of color into the learning community movement? Diversity and learning communities have a natural connection. Imagine a universal learning community where the environment is safe for everyone, where people care about *who* students of color are and where and what they are learning.

The other "grandmothers" still not so present at the LC table are student services people. These folks are natural partners for faculty, yet are often untapped at institutions. Student services people care about students and student learning and they want to create environments where student learning is enhanced. I challenge faculty to reach out and invite student services people to the table because *they* can be advocates for the work that *you* do. They can help to change the structures that we have in place.

The last group of people I didn't see at the conference—who are not yet completely at the table but are just standing at the door looking in—are the administrators. Faculty need support in order to do the work inside the classroom, and administrators need to understand what learning communities are about so they can provide that needed support.

I challenge each of you to invite "the grandmothers" to the table at your institution, whether they are administrators, student services staff, or people of color. Also, invite students to the table because they have a wealth of fresh ideas and input to offer.

Maybe we can begin to have a common thread about learning communities, based on these questions:

What is the culture of learning communities that we may want to replicate?

What do we want to move forward?

How do we provide learning environments that validate what people know, who they are, what their experiences are?

How do we create and maintain that throughout our institutions, both inside and outside the classroom?



Thinking about Diversity Work

Jane Jervis, President
The Evergreen State College

I graduated from a legally segregated high school in 1955, and was turned down from jobs because I was a woman. When people tell you the law doesn't change society or the way we are or the way we live, they are simply wrong. In my lifetime I have witnessed tremendous change in these areas. But I am dismayed that current discussions about diversity and inclusiveness are often held at a superficial level—in terms of participation, and sometimes in terms of social justice.

Diversity, and learning across deep differences—regardless of what those differences are—are resources for learning. They are tools for learning to think critically, for understanding the world that is fundamental. This is one of the basic principles, I think, of learning. We learn the most and best from people who are as different from us as possible. Without those differences, we may as well all stay home and talk to ourselves.

Pew Charitable Trust Funds Major Grant to Strengthen Learning Communities

The Pew Charitable Trust has generously awarded Evergreen's Washington Center for Improving Undergraduate Education a \$1.2 million grant for a PEW National Learning Communities Project. The four-year project will disseminate technical advice on learning community approaches, develop learning community leadership across the country and assist campuses in starting and strengthening programs. The American Association of Higher Education will be a partner in the project, publishing a set of monographs on learning communities, and building linkages to the project through its conferences.

The overall intention of learning communities—curriculum restructuring approaches that involve linking or clustering courses that are traditionally taught separately—is to provide students and teachers with an involved, integrated and lasting learning experience.

The Washington Center has supported learning community development in its 48 partner campuses in Washington for the past 15 years. In 1996, it began going national with its learning community outreach through a three-year FIPSE funded grant directed by Jean MacGregor. Building on that effort, the Pew Trust National Learning Communities Project will support the development of a large national learning communities web site, a series of learning community summer institutes and leadership development retreats, a monograph series (published by AAHE) on issues and best practices in the field, and will support several emerging regionally-based learning community leadership groups in other parts of the country. The project will be led by Barbara Leigh Smith, Evergreen's academic vice-president, and Jean MacGregor and Emily Decker of the Washington Center.

Calendar of Events

May 18-19, 2000

Critical Moments Implementation Workshop
Rainbow Lodge, North Bend, WA

May 26, 2000

Latinola Cultures and the Process of Learning
Cavanaugh Gateway, Yakima, WA

June 20-21, 2000

Planning Committee Spring Retreat
Rainbow Lodge, North Bend, WA

October 19-20, 2000

Learning Communities Retreat: Assessing our Practice and Planning our Future
Pack Forest, Eatonville, WA

November 2-3, 2000

Math Reform Network Workshop
North Bend, WA

November 9, 2000

African American Cultures and the Process of Learning (State Board)
Tacoma Community College

November 16-17, 2000

Critical Moments Retreat
Rainbow Lodge, North Bend, WA

December 1, 2000

Planning Committee Meeting
North Seattle Community College

January 26, 2001

Native American Cultures and the Process of Learning
TBA

February 22-24, 2001

Annual Conference: Teaching and Learning in the Context of Cultural Differences
Marriott Hotel, SeaTac, WA

March 8-9, 2001

Learning Community Coordinators/Evaluation Committee Retreat
TBA

April 5-6, 2001

Curriculum Planning Retreat, East
TBA

April 26-27, 2001

Curriculum Planning Retreat, West
TBA

Current event information is available on the Web site: www.evergreen.edu/washcenter.

Learning Community Programs in Washington

Learning communities purposefully restructure the curriculum to link together courses so that students find greater coherence in the courses they take, as well as increased intellectual interaction with faculty and fellow students. The following is a listing of learning communities offered in Fall, Winter and Spring Quarters, 1999-2000.

Unless otherwise indicated, the learning communities at community colleges are being offered in college transfer Associate Degree programs. The component subject matter is listed after each faculty member's name. Please be in touch with the colleges and faculty involved if you would like more information about any of these programs.

Bellevue Community College

Fall Quarter

Coordinated Studies

The Pacific Rim

Gordon Leighton/English
Graham Haslam/English
Charles Dodd/Geography
Donna Sharpe/Human Development

Coordinated Studies

The Eye of the Heart

Michael Meyer/English
Jerrie Kennedy/English
Laura Burns-Lewis/English

Coordinated Studies

The Mythical Quest

Linda Leeds/English
Julianne Seeman/English

Coordinated Studies

Quality and Quantity

Jennifer Laveglia/Mathematics
Robin Jeffers/English

Winter Quarter

Coordinated Studies

Of Mice and Matter

Carol Burton/Life Sciences
Cathy Lyle/Chemistry
Melodye Gold/Life Sciences
Laura Nudelman/Speech

Coordinated Studies

The Wisdom of the East

David Jurji/Anthropology
Mark Storey/Philosophy

Coordinated Studies

By Design

Connie Wais/Interior Design
Bob Purser/Art
Mike Hanson/Botany

Spring Quarter

Coordinated Studies

Love Under the Microscope:

Sex, Gender and Relationships
James Ellinger/Biology
Helen Taylor/Psychology

Coordinated Studies

Surrealism: Umbrellas on Dissection

Tables -The Dark Side of Art
Vicki Artimovich/Art
Woody West/English

Coordinated Studies

*The Roots Connection: The Act
and Activity of Plant Biology*

Erick Haakenson/Philosophy

Centralia College

Spring Quarter

Linked Class

The Ethics of Human Development

Victor Villa/Developmental Psychology
Don Foran/Introduction to Ethics

Edmonds Community College

Fall Quarter

Coordinated Studies

The Write Stuff

Cheryl McLean/Writing
Chris Aiken/Political Science
Robin Datta/Reading
Melissa Newell/Humanities

Coordinated Studies

Power Learning: Habits of Highly

Effective Students
Sandra Cross/Speech
Kaila Spring/Study Skills

Coordinated Studies

Collegebra: Success in Math and College

Chandler Clifton/Study Skills
Richard Davis/Mathematics

Coordinated Studies

Surviving the Climb Through English 100

Holly Havnaer/English
Patricia Nerison/English

Coordinated Studies

Chemath

Mary O'Brien/Chemistry
Jim Francis/Mathematics

Spring Quarter

Coordinated Studies

Building 101: The Making of Place

Rebecca Hartzler/Physics
Anne Martin/Sociology
Maria Kelly/Environmental Science

Coordinated Studies

The Global Connection

Sue Sutherland-Hanson/English
Anne Roda/Communications

Coordinated Studies

American Communities in Transition:

1865 to Y2K
Gene Taylor/History
Claire Sharpe/Reading

Coordinated Studies

English 100 for the Grammatically

Challenged
Sandra Linsin/English
Penny Shively/Reading

Winter Quarter

Coordinated Studies

Toward a Culture of Nature

Holly Hughes/English

Coordinated Studies

Across Time and Terrain: A Scientific and

Historical Look at the Pacific Northwest
Barbara Haas/Environmental Science
Barbara Harrell/History

Coordinated Studies

Chemath

Mary O'Brien/Chemistry
Jim Francis/Mathematics

Fairhaven College

Fall Quarter

Linked Class

Freshman Block

Stan Tag
Larry Estrada
Leslie Conton
Dana Jack
Vernon Johnson/Political Science

Coordinated Studies

Law and Diversity

Marian Rodriguez
Rand Jack
Connie Faulkner

Winter Quarter

Linked Class

Law and Diversity

Marian Rodriguez
Rand Jack
Connie Faulkner
Bill Lyne/English

Coordinated Studies

The American Southwest

Stan Tag
John Bower

Spring Quarter

Linked Class

Law and Diversity

Marian Rodriguez
Rand Jack
Connie Faulkner

Gonzaga University

Fall Quarter

Linked Class

Thought and Expression

M. Pajer/English

M. Alfino/Philosophy

K. Hilgersom/Speech Communications

Linked Class

Thought and Expression

M. Pajer/English

M. Alfino/Philosophy

R. Vogel/Speech Communications

Linked Class

Thought and Expression

P. Terry/English

D. Calhoun/Philosophy

K. Clark/Speech Communications

Linked Class

Thought and Expression

N. Holland/English

B. Clayton/Philosophy

H. Hazel/Speech Communications

Highline Community College

Fall Quarter

Coordinated Studies

So Far from Home: Immigrants,

Refugees, Expatriates, and Guest Workers

Jean Harris/Anthropology

Angie Caster/Writing

Coordinated Studies

Eating the Environment: Food,

Culture, and Politics on the Pacific Rim

Jennifer Jones/Geography

Davidson Dodd/Global Studies

Patrick Pynes/Writing

Coordinated Studies

We the jury. . .

Joy Smucker/Legal

Barbara Clinton/Speech

Lower Columbia College

Fall Quarter

Coordinated Studies

Warriors, Magicians, Lovers
David McCarthy/Language & Literature
David McCarthy/Art

Coordinated Studies

*Seeing and Saying: An Intro to
Visual and Verbal Design*
Carolyn Norred/Language & Literature
Rosemary Powelson/Fine Arts

Winter Quarter

Coordinated Studies

Shape of Things to Come
Jerry Zimmerman/Social Science
Darlene deVida/Computer Info Sys
David Benson/Political Science

Coordinated Studies

Style and Revolution
Yvette O'Neill, Fine Arts
Rita Fontaine, Language & Literature

Spring Quarter

Coordinated Studies

Race, Class, Sex, and Gender
Don Correll/Drama
Michael Strayer/Psychology

Shoreline Community College

Fall Quarter

Team Taught

Civilization and Culture
Dale Haefer/History
Katherine Hunt/Humanities

Coordinated Studies

*Taking it all off: Exposing Sexuality in
Media, Literature and Everyday Life*
Diana Knaut/Psychology
Ortiz/Speech Communication
Diane Gould/English Literature

Team Taught

The Zoo is You
Kathleen Lynch/Speech Communication
Don McVay/Biology

Team Taught

Dreams and Nightmares: Imagined or Real
Neal Vasishth/English
Smith/Psychology

Winter Quarter

Team Taught

Civilization and Culture
Dale Haefer/History
Katherine Hunt/Humanities

Team Taught

Bard on the Bus
Paul Cerda/English Literature
Jim Newman/Drama

Team Taught

Inventing America
Duvall Daniel/English Literature
Gary Parks/English

Spring Quarter

Team Taught

Civilization and Culture
Dale Haefer/History
Katherine Hunt/Humanities

Skagit Valley Community College, Mount Vernon Campus

Fall Quarter

Team Taught

Mastery in Math

Terry Matzko/Mathematics
Nancy Flint/Ed

Team Taught

The Mathematical Solution to Wellness

Chuck Stevens/Mathematics
Nancy Anderson/Physical Education

Team Taught

What's the Problem?

Debbie Nichol/Mathematics
Trish Barnes/English
Fred Jackson/Ethnic Studies
Lynn Dunlap/Literature

Team Taught

Theatre of Culture

Andy Friedlander/Drama
Fred Jackson/Anthropology
Larry Sult/Political Science
Chuck Luckmann/English

Team Taught

Vanishing Views: Art, Ecology and a Sustainable Campus

Ann Reid/Art
Claus Svendsen/Natural Science
Vivan Dills-Parker/Literature

Team Taught

The Composition of Communication

Linda Smith/Speech
Jovita Lopez/English

Team Taught

The XXY Files

Skip Pass/Biology
Linda Moore/Reading
Trish Barnes/English

Team Taught

Cultures in Contact: Early American History and Literature

Ann Will/History
Chuck Luckmann/Literature

Team Taught

Speaking About Law

Lee Ash/Business Administration
Jason Lind/Speech

Winter Quarter

Team Taught

The Seeing Self

Ann Reid/Art
Linda Smith/Speech

Team Taught

The Reading Writing Connection

Terrian Webster/Reading
Linda Moore/English

Team Taught

Beyond 'Buckwheat': Ethnicity, Identity and Imagery on the Silver Screen

David Muga/Anthropology

Team Taught

On the World Stage: Theatre and Politics

Andy Friedlander/Drama
Lorna Greene/Early Childhood Ed

Team Taught

Crosscurrents and Conflicts: The Musics and Texts of the Colonized

Larry Sult/Philosophy
David Asplin/Music

Linked Class

The Writing of History

Ann Will/History
Jennifer Handley/English

Linked Class

Researching the Construct of Human Oppression

David Muga/Sociology
Jovita Lopez/English

Linked Class

Daily Planet: Writing and Space

Brad Smith/Astronomy
Ted O'Connell/English

Linked Class

Writing for the Social Sciences

Wendy Olson/English

Spring Quarter

Team Taught

Antigone to Antimatter

Andy Friendlander/Drama,
Brad Smith/Physics

Team Taught

Speaking of Culture

Linda Smith/Speech
Fred Jackson/Ethnic Studies

Team Taught

The World of Wonder and Enchantment

Greg Tate/Art

Team Taught

From Little Red School House to Virtual School

Ann Will/History

Team Taught

Sex and Ethics

Lynne Fouquette/Psychology
Jennifer Handley/English

Linked Class

Fragments of the Human Body

Eve Deisher/Art
Jovita Lopez/English

Linked Class

Exploring Contemporary Math and Writing

Greta Kocol/Mathematics
Chuck Luckmann/English

Linked Class

Oceanography & Composition

Ben Fackler-Adams/Earth Science
Chuck Luckmann/English

Linked Class

Know What I Mean?: Writing About American Jazz

Diane Johnson/Music
Ted O'Connell/English

Team Taught

Prose and Constitution
Kurt Dunbar/History
Christopher Wise/Literature

Team Taught

Living Systems in a Changing Society
Jim Monroe/Biology
David Muga/Sociology

Linked Class

*Disentangling the World: Exploring the
Elements through Writing*
Perminder Sandhu/Chemistry
Vivan Dills-Parker/English

Linked Class

Exploring Psychology
Lynne Fouquette/Psychology
Linda Hendrick/Library Science

Linked Class

Writing About Psychology
Lynne Fouquette/Psychology
Jennifer Handley/English

Linked Class

Writing About Sociology

Linked Class

Writing About Nutrition

Linked Class

Writing About Psychology

Linked Class

Writing in the Sciences
Ted O'Connell/English

Linked Class

Research in Technical Fields

Skagit Valley Community College, Whidbey Campus

Fall Quarter**Linked Class**

Writing with Psychology
Tatom/Psychology
Lee/English

Linked Class

Exploring Mass Communications
Graham/Speech
Graham/English

Linked Class

Health Writer
Hughes/English
Stafford/Physical Education

Coordinated Studies

Drawing on the Environment
Hall/Art
Staff/Natural Science
Folsom/Biology

Winter Quarter**Linked Class**

Writing and Sociology
LaBombard/Sociology
Wood/English

Linked Class

Composition with Fiction
Lee/Literature
Lee/English

Linked Class

Writing on the Millennium
Graham/Sociology
Graham/English

Linked Class

Composition with Anatomy and Physiology
Matzen/English

Spring Quarter**Linked Class**

Writing and Global Issues
LaBombard/Sociology
Lee/English

Linked Class

Writing and World Literature
Woode/Literature
Woode/English

Linked Class

Fleshing Out the Bones
Folsom/Nursing
Matsen/English

Linked Class

Writing with Social Psychology
Moburg/Psychology
Stanwood/English

Coordinated Studies

Knights in Shining Armor
Moburg/Stanwood/History
Moburg/Stanwood/Humanities

Coordinated Studies

Celebrate Yourself: ABC's of Academic Success
Matzen
Hughes
McCartney
Moburg/Literature

Coordinated Studies

Strange Worlds
LaBombard/Anthropology
LaBombard/Literature
Stanwood/Anthropology
Stanwood/Literature

Coordinated Studies

Millennium
Sprague/Sociology
Graham/Sociology

Coordinated Studies

Past-Views: Western History Through Film
Moburg/History

Coordinated Studies

Man and Society
Moburg/Psychology
Stanwood/English

Coordinated Studies

The Human Animal
LaBombard/Staff/Anthropology
LaBombard/Staff/Biology

Coordinated Studies

Carnaval: Culture and Film
Lower/Speech
Lee/Literature

South Seattle Community College**Fall Quarter****Coordinated Studies**

First-Year Experience
Bob Rice/Psychology
Judy Bentley/English

Spokane Falls Community College**Fall Quarter****Coordinated Studies**

Like Clockwork: Exploring What Makes Us Tick
Nancy Ohuche/Psychology
LaVonne Weller/English
Heather Keast/English

Coordinated Studies

Passion and Power: Women Writers
Barbara Williamson/English
Alexis Nelson/English

Coordinated Studies

*Introduction to Psychology
with Improved Thinking Skills*
Larry Vandervert/Psychology
Dexter Amend/Psychology

Coordinated Studies

The American Experience
Patricia Nasburg/ESL
Nel Hellenberg/English

Coordinated Studies

A College Survival Kit
Steve Reames/English
Ed Reynolds/English

Coordinated Studies

Read, Listen and Respond

James Keenan/English

Wayne Smith/Music

Coordinated Studies

Engineering Problems with Technical Writing

James Bellotty/Engineering

Mark Stimpfle/English

Linked Class

Introduction to Deaf Culture with College

Reading/Study Skills

Marie Rendon/Interpreter Training

Teresa Massey/Communications

Linked Class

Art and Algebra

James Hallam/Mathematics

Linked Class

Writing and College Success

Linnea Sykes/English

Linked Class

Teachers of Children! Master Students!

Leigh Anna Drake/Early Childhood Dev.

Linked Class

Learning and Coping

Poly McMahon/Gerontology

Linked Class

Office Automation Update with College Success

Kathie O'Brien/Business

Linda Roth/Business

Tacoma Community College**Fall Quarter****Linked Class**

Hollywood's American History

Scott Earle/English

Brian Duchin/History

Linked Class

American National Government and

Politics / Argument and Persuasion

Steve Sandweiss/Political Science

David Endicott/English

Coordinated Studies

Overcoming Math Anxiety

Karen Clark/Mathematics

Diane Nason/Human Development

Coordinated Studies

Beyond Western Boundaries

Debbie Kinerk/English

Ken Fox/Humanities

Mailing List

Please return this form if you would like to be

added to, or deleted from our mailing list

Name _____

Department _____

Institution _____

Address _____

Send to: Mailing List, Washington Center, L 2211, The Evergreen State College,
Olympia, WA 98505, call (360) 866-6000, ext. 6611 or
e-mail washcntr@evergreen.edu

Washington Center Planning Committee

Antioch University: Lois Harris

Bellevue Community College: Michael Meyer

Central Washington University: Terry Martin

Eastern Washington University: Larry Kiser

North Seattle Community College: Willard Bill, Cathy Chun, Jim Harnish

Seattle Central Community College: Rochelle de la Cruz, Rosetta Hunter, Audrey Wright

South Seattle Community College: Mark Palek

Tacoma Community College: Marlene Bosanko, Kathi Hiyane-Brown

The Evergreen State College: Rob Cole, Magda Costantino, Joye Hardiman, Nancy Taylor,
Barbara Leigh Smith

The University of Washington: Cathy Beyer, Kim Johnson-Bogart, Michaelann Jundt

The University of Washington-Bothell: Bruce Kochis

Washington State University: Richard Law

Western Washington University: Marie Eaton

Whitworth College: Gordon Watanabe

At Large Members

Rhonda Coats: State Board for Community and Technical Colleges

Washington Center Staff

Jeanine Elliott, Director

Emily Decker, Associate Director

Sue Hirst, Program Coordinator

Barbara Determan, Event Coordinator

Sharilyn Howell, Secretary

The Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education

■ Established in 1985 at Evergreen as an inter-institutional consortium, the Center focuses on low-cost, high-yield approaches to educational reform, emphasizing better utilization and sharing of existing resources through collaboration among member institutions. Established with funding from the Exxon and Ford Foundations, the Center is now supported by the Washington State Legislature.

■ Includes 48 participating institutions: all of the state's public four-year institutions and community colleges, two technical colleges, one tribal college and ten independent colleges.

■ Supports and coordinates the development of interdisciplinary "learning community" programs, inter-institutional faculty exchanges, curriculum reform initiatives in science, mathematics and cultural pluralism, and offers conferences, seminars and technical assistance on effective approaches to teaching and learning.

Washington Center
for Improving the Quality of
Undergraduate Education

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Olympia, WA
Permit No. 65

The Evergreen State College
Olympia, Washington 98505