

TRANSFORMING STUDENTS' LIVING ENVIRONMENTS INTO ACADEMIC COMMUNITIES

AN INTERACTIVE PRESENTATION

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ABSTRACT

Living learning communities (LLCs) promote collaborative environments by grouping students of a similar interest or major within the same area of a residence hall. These communities create seamless learning experiences that bridge the gap between students' classroom and social environments. LLCs attempt to cultivate holistic student development and connect students with faculty, which can affect student retention at all levels. Many studies demonstrate positive learning outcomes associated with LLCs, including stronger bonds with classmates, greater peer and faculty support, stronger perceptions of gains in learning, and greater connections to academics. The Forensic Science LLC at UCO is a partnership between the Forensic Science Institute (FSI) and the department of Housing & Dining. Students share their living environment and major-specific classes and experience transformative learning through faculty and peer interactions, early exposure to the field of study, peer and staff support, and programming initiatives that build beyond-disciplinary skills. This community has proven its success as a high-impact practice that develops students in ways that encourage them to be involved, intelligent, and transformed in the classroom and in their living community. Facilitated by an FSI faculty member and a Housing representative, this interactive session explores the power of positive relationships between faculty and student affairs that enhance student learning outcomes. LLC members and FSI faculty join the discussion with their perceptions of the community and classroom interactions.

SELECT REFERENCES

Tinto, V. (1999). Learning communities: Building gateways to student success. Speech presented at the ACPA Annual Meeting, Denver, CO.

Wawrzynski M. R. & Jessup-Anger, J. E. (2010). From expectations to experiences: Using a structural typology to understand first-year student outcomes in academically based living-learning communities. *Journal of College Student Development*, 51(2), 201-217.

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