Threading the needle
Aligning Pedagogy, Professional Development, and Program Assessment

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Session outline

National context for learning community work

- Evolving national practice
- Update on national research

National focus on integrative learning

- Nation-wide conversations in higher education
- Carnegie/AAC&U statement on integrative learning

Implications for professional development & program assessment

- Lessons from the National Project on Assessing Learning
  in Learning Communities

Evolving national practice

From curricular to educational reform

❖ Shift from "models" to *purposeful learning*

What kind of learning do you want students to experience?

What are you trying to do for students with your learning community program?

❖ Learning communities as an intervention strategy

- Identify where students are "at risk" in the curriculum using institutional data, i.e. curricular trouble spots
- Situate learning communities where student need is greatest
- Design integrative assignments that intentionally develop students' understanding and abilities based on contemporary issues

~ "A New Era in Learning Community Work." Emily Lardner and Gillies Malnarich, *Change* , July/August 2008.

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Evolving national practice
Using data: What are the curricular trouble spots?

| 30% or more students drift away after one month | 50% or more students earn low grades or drop out | Courses that have a reputation for being tough— gateway or platform courses | Transition courses from pre-college to college-level curriculum |

Update on national research

First major empirical study of learning communities

A Good Start: Two-Year Effects of a Freshman Learning Community Program at Kingsborough Community College. MDRC, March 2008

- Student cohorts matter in terms of persistence
- The quality of learning communities varies depending on what happens in the classroom

~ MDRC, Sue Scrivener et al.

Update on national research
Longitudinal study of thirteen community colleges

"Learning Better Together: The Impact of Learning Communities on the Persistence of Low-Income Students." *Opportunity Matters*, Volume One, 2008.

- Research continues to show that learning communities can make a difference in student persistence and achievement rates.

"The findings from this study enable us to relearn an important lesson, namely that access without support is not an opportunity. As this study shows, providing meaningful support requires more than the mere provision of tutoring, basic skills courses, and learning centers."

~ Cathy McHugh Engstrom and Vincent Tinto, Syracuse University

Update on national research
Features of learning communities that engage students

Experiences That Matter: Enhancing Student Learning and Success. National Survey of Student Engagement, (NSSE) Annual Report 2007.

- A cohort—two courses are sufficient—the learning community doesn't have to be full time.

- Explicit opportunities—through assignments or discussions or both—to integrate learning across courses.

- Connections to out-of-class experiences.

Update on national research
Learning communities as a "high impact educational practice"

High Impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access to Them, and Why They Matter. George D. Kuh. AAC&U, 2008.

Shared features
  - students devote considerable time and effort to purposeful tasks
  - students interact with faculty and peers about substantive matters
  - students are more likely to experience diversity through contact with people different from themselves
  - students get ongoing feedback about their performance
  - students see how what they are learning works in different settings, on and off campus

Update on national research

Comprehensive literature review on high impact practices

peerReview

Good Teaching
What is it and How Do We Measure it?
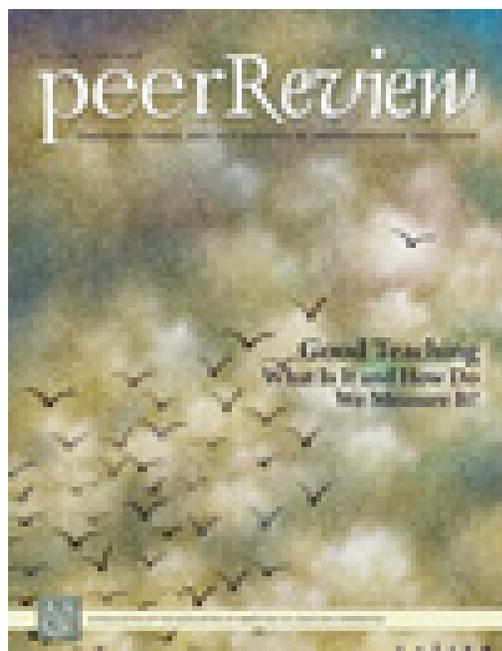
"High-Impact Practices: Applying the Learning Outcomes Literature to the Development of Successful Campus Programs." *Peer Review*, Spring 2009.

~ Jayne Brownell and Lynn Swaner

- Drawn from an extensive report prepared for AAC&U in 2008, "Outcomes of High Impact Practices for Underserved Students: A Review of the Literature."
(pp. 15-56 on learning communities)

http://www.aacu.org/inclusive_excellence/documents/DRAFTProjectUSALiteratureReview.pdf

Update on national research
The roles of student affairs in learning communities

Promoting Partnerships for Student Success: Lessons from the SSPIRE*
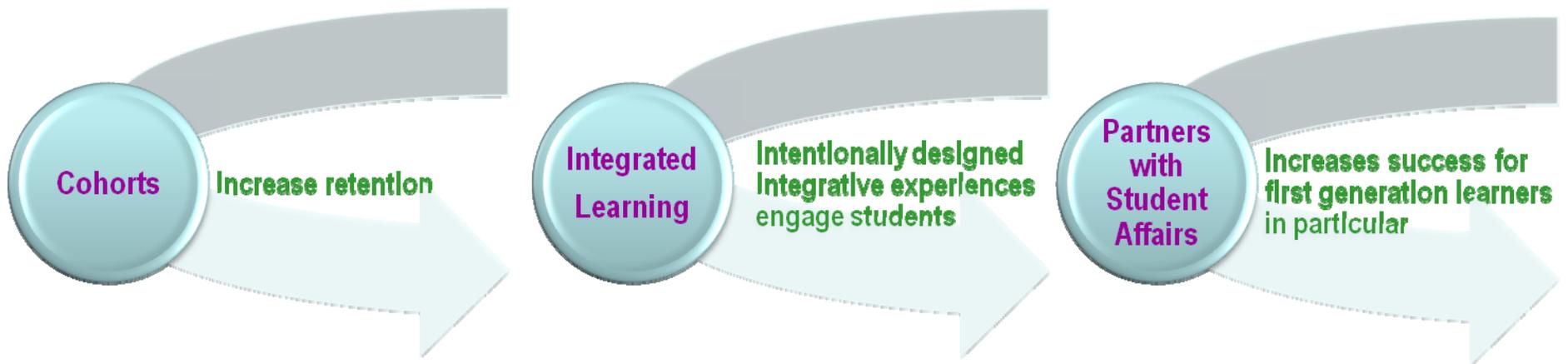*Initiative.* MDRC, July 2009.

See chapter two:

Reports on the experiences of five community colleges in California (American River College, College of Alameda, De Anza College, Mt. San Antonio College, and Santa Ana College) who have infused student services into their learning community programs using one of two models.

(* Student Support Partnerships Integrating Resources and Education)

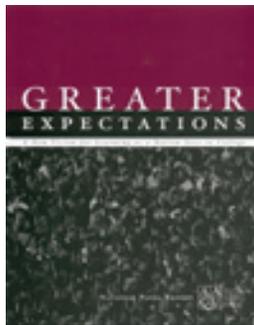# Update on national research

Cohorts — Increase retention

Integrated Learning — Intentionally designed Integrative experiences engage students

Partners with Student Affairs — Increases success for first generation learners in particular

Focus on integrative learning

Nation-wide conversations in higher education

Greater Expectations: A New Vision for Learning as a Nation Goes to College, 2002

- "Everyone is entitled to an education of quality."

- Two interconnected goals: "access to college learning of *high quality* for every student" and "appropriate preparation for all to *succeed* at this demanding level."
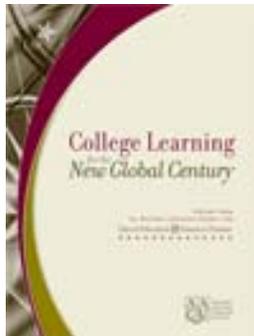
College Learning for the New Global Century, 2007

- Identifying "essential learning outcomes"

- Remapping liberal education for the 21st century

Integrative learning as an essential learning outcome

❖ **Knowledge of human cultures and the natural and physical world**
  - focused by engagement with big questions, both contemporary and enduring

❖ **Intellectual & practical skills**
  - practiced extensively, across the curriculum--progressively more challenging
  problems, projects, and standards of performance

❖ **Personal & social responsibility**
  - anchored through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world
  challenges

❖ **Integrative learning**
  Synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies
  - demonstrated through the application of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities
  to new settings and complex problems

~ AAC&U Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) Report,
College Learning for the New Global Century, 2007

Carnegie/AAC&U Statement on Integrative Learning

To what degree does this account of integrative learning resonate with *both* learning in general on your campus *and* learning experienced by students in learning communities?

Remapping liberal education as a "liberating education"

In the 20th century

What

- an elite curriculum

- non-vocational

- an option for the fortunate

Where

- liberal arts colleges or colleges of arts and sciences in larger institutions

How

- through studies in arts and sciences fields ("the major") and/or through general education in the initial years of college

In the 21st century

What

- a necessity for all students

- essential for success in a global economy and for informed citizenship

Where

- all schools, community colleges, colleges, and universities; across all fields of study

How

- through studies across the entire educational continuum: school through college

~ AAC&U LEAP Report, 2007

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Integrative learning as a shared focus

Teaching — From "coverage" to key ideas, skills and habits of mind: essential learning outcomes

Learning — From "quantity" to quality of learning: depth of understanding and integrative thinking

Assessing — From "possessing" to using knowledge: student work as evidence of learning

Program assessment and professional development

"What kind of learning do learning communities make possible?"

- *Learning Community Research and Assessment: What We Know Now*

  ~ Kathe Taylor, William S. Moore, Jean MacGregor, Jerry Linblad, 2003

- "Assessing Student Work at the Disciplinary Crossroads." *Change,* January/February 2004

  ~ Veronica Boix-Mansilla, Harvard Graduate School of Education, Project Zero

National Project on Assessing Learning in Learning Communities

22 campus teams from two- and four-year schools

Journal of Learning Communities Research, Volume 3, Number 3

National Project on Assessing Learning in Learning Communities

Challenge:

What kind of learning do learning communities make possible?

Method:

Campus teams as co-researchers

- examine student work
- use Collaborative Assessment Protocol
- use heuristic Designing Purposeful and Integrative Learning
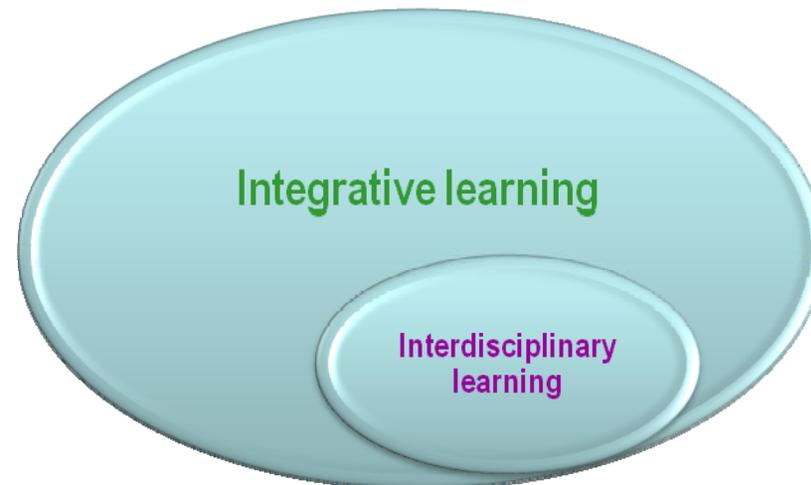- report on findings at project meetings

Commitment:

Develop students' abilities to do the intellectual work of intentional integration

First discovery
Relationship between integrative learning & interdisciplinary work

Integrative learning is a fundamental habit of mind;
Interdisciplinary learning represents a special case.

Second discovery
Power of examining student work

"Professional development has been the most powerful effect of the project for us. It has helped us…increase the energy within teams, demand a "product" in terms of student work, and enabled us to reflect more carefully on the product."
~ La Guardia Community College

"The protocol prompted faculty to notice and appreciate the work before moving to a critical examination."
~ North Seattle Community College

"Grounding the conversation in student work turns attention to long-term, deep learning. This conversation frames assessment in relation to key artifacts and change over time."
~Iowa State University

Third discovery

Importance of disciplinary grounding

Knowledge
- focused by engagement with big questions, both contemporary and enduring

Methods
- practiced extensively, across the curriculum, in the context of progressively more challenging problems, projects, and standards of performance

Purposes
- anchored through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges

Forms of communication
- demonstrated through the application of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems

~ Veronica Boix-Mansilla, "Assessing Student Learning at Disciplinary Crossroads," *Change,* 2004

Learning more about findings from the National Project

- *Journal of Learning Communities Research*, December 2008/January 2009

- "When Faculty Assess Integrative Learning: Faculty Inquiry to Improve Learning Community Practice."

~ Emily Lardner and Gillies Malnarich, *Change*, September/October 2009

- website: http://wacenter.evergreen.edu/

Aligning Professional Development and Program Assessment

❖ Does the learning community program on your campus name integrative learning as a shared outcome across learning community course offerings?

❖ Does your learning community program have the expectation that faculty will include two or more intentionally-designed experiences of integrative learning for students?

Professional development

❖ Do faculty have opportunities to discuss the designs of their integrative assignments before and/or after using them with students?

❖ Do faculty have opportunities to discuss student work that comes from these integrative assignments?

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From learning community programs
Sample assignments/faculty reflections

- ❖ Select one of the assignments at your table and read it, focusing on what students were asked to do, and on the faculty reflections.

- ❖ What do you notice about the assignment and the reflections?

- ❖ What would make it possible for faculty in your learning community program to have ongoing conversations based on assignments and student work?

Program assessment

❖ What quantitative data does your campus currently use to situate learning communities?

❖ What quantitative data does your campus currently use to measure students' success (e.g. course completion, GPA, persistence)?

❖ Can you add to the standard quantitative measures these more qualitative measures:

- Looking at samples of student work in learning community programs with a focus on evidence of integrative learning?

- Looking at samples of assignments from learning community programs with a focus on intentional coaching of integrative thinking?

Threading the needle
Program assessment and professional development

❖ **Critical link:**

Integrative learning as a programmatic shared outcome.

❖ **Critical practice:**

Making time for faculty to talk together about assignments and the resulting student work, and to reflect on implications for future assignments.