

Project Name:	University Housing Expansion of Residential Learning Communities (RLCs)
MIU Round:	Round 2
Sponsor(s):	Division of University Housing
Coordinator(s):	Paul Evans (Director of University Housing), Cal Bergman (Associate Director of Residence Life – Academics)
Partner(s):	Schools of Education and Business; Division of International Studies; Colleges of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Engineering, Letters and Science; Arts Institute; Institute for Biology Education
Report Date:	Year 1, August 2011; Year 2, July 2012; Year 3, July 2013

Project Specific Goal and Measures	
Project Impact Measure(s)	Stabilize the funding model for the Residential Learning Communities (RLCs) so that the number of communities can be expanded to serve more students by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing stable funding for the time and effort of faculty directors (formerly negotiated with schools and colleges annually). • Providing the salary funding for a .5 FTE administrator in each RLC. • Expanding the number and scope of RLCs offered to University Housing residents by providing funding for faculty directors and .5 FTE administrators for up to 10 total RLCs.
Project Impact Data Source(s)	Division of University Housing records.
Baseline Measure(s)	Number of RLCs and student participation in the 2009-10 academic year.

General MIU Goals and Measures (applicable to project)		
B	Increased capacity for high-demand experiences	Student interest in RLCs has outpaced capacity. Expansion of both the number of RLCs and the RLC topics will allow more students to participate and will diversify the offerings available to students.
C	Increased capacity for high-impact practices	RLCs intentionally integrate inside and outside of classroom learning and are considered nationally to be a high impact practice. By stabilizing the funding for existing and new RLCs that will appeal to students not currently served by existing offerings, more students will have the opportunity to participate. Participation also serves as a platform for engagement in other high impact practices, often coordinated within the RLC curriculum, such as small seminar courses, service learning, peer mentoring, internships, research with faculty members, and first year interest groups (FIGs).

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D	Increased student learning and teaching excellence	Each RLC includes a seminar offering with the affiliated faculty member(s). These seminars are organized around the RLC topic and are small in class size allowing for maximum interaction between the students and the instructor. Surveys of students in these seminars show that they report getting to know their seminar instructors better than the instructors of their other courses.
F	Decreased achievement gaps	University Housing staff have facilitated access and participation in RLCs among students from targeted minority groups as well as international students and students from low income backgrounds. Participation among students in these groups exceed their representation in the student body as a whole. In collaboration with the Office of Student Financial Aid, University Housing funds and implements a grant program for low income students to offset the RLC program fee.

Progress Reports

Year 1, 2010-11

- Offered 7 Residential Learning Community (RLC) options to students including: Bradley Learning Community (focus on first year students), Chadbourne Residential College (focus on liberal education), Entrepreneurial Residential Learning Community, Green House (focus on environmental issues), International Learning Community (including 6 language groups), Multicultural Learning Community, and Women in Science and Engineering.
 - In conjunction with the 7 RLCs in 2010-11, offered 77 seminar sections with 922 participants (average class size of 12).
 - Fielded an RFP process for new RLC proposals. Criteria used for selection include anticipate student interest, diversification of the RLC portfolio, and strength of support from academic units and faculty.
 - Selected and worked on the Fall 2012 implementation of the Creative Arts and Design Residential Learning Community with the Arts Institute. Selected Patrick Sims, professor of Theater and Drama, as the Faculty Director. Started the process to select a Program Coordinator.
 - Provisionally selected and started planning the BioHouse and Gender Learning Communities with the Institute for Biology Education and Gender and Women's Studies, respectively.
 - Planned for the addition of Russian language to the International Learning Community in Fall 2011.
 - Provided funding for the continuation of the Entrepreneurial Residential Learning Community in 2011-12 (formerly funded by the Kaufmann Foundation).
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Year 2, 2011-12

- Offered 7 Residential Learning Community (RLC) options to students including: Bradley Learning Community (focus on first year students), Chadbourne Residential College (focus on liberal education), Entrepreneurial Residential Learning Community, Green House (focus on environmental issues), International Learning Community (including 7 language groups), Multicultural Learning Community, and Women in Science and Engineering.
- Implemented the Creative Arts & Design Learning Community which will open in Fall 2012, including a seminar course “Creativity and the Civic-Minded Culture”. Implementation involved remodeling space in Sellery Hall to include performance space with sprung floors, visual arts and design studios, and music practice rooms.
- Added Russian language program to the International Learning Community.
- Worked with faculty in Gender and Women’s studies to plan the Gender Learning Community. Planning will continue through the 2012-13 year to identify residence hall space for the program, recruitment of a program coordinator, and development of the co-curricular components.
- Collectively offered 77 seminar sections (connected to each RLC) with an average class size of 12 students per instructor.
 - a) Facilitated student participation in high impact practices, including:
 - b) Service learning: 7 RLCs, 765 participants
 - c) Peer mentoring: 4 RLCs, 32 participants
 - d) Internships: 6 RLCs, 12 paid participants
 - e) Research: 5 RLCs, 11 research grants
 - f) Common intellectual experiences: 7 RLCs, 2331 participants (57 experiences)
 - g) Diversity/Global Learning: 6 RLCs, 4024 participants (360 experiences)
- Assessment: Compared responses on the 2011 administration of the National Survey of Student Engagement for RLC students to other first-year students on campus. RLC students showed significantly more positive experiences on 9 questions including: participation in service learning, discussing ideas with faculty members outside of class, working with faculty members on non-course activities, reading books on their own, working more on problem sets for an hour or more, attending arts or cultural events, participating in learning communities, working on a research project with faculty outside of class, doing independent study.

Year 3, 2012-13

- Offered 8 Residential Learning Community (RLC) options to students including: Bradley Learning Community (focus on first year students), Chadbourne Residential College (focus on liberal education), Entrepreneurial Residential Learning Community, Green House (focus on environmental sustainability issues), International Learning Community (including 8 language groups), Multicultural Learning Community, Women in Science and Engineering, and The Studio (focus on creative arts and design), new in 2012-13.

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Year 3, continued

- Implemented the Open House Learning Community (focused on gender and sexuality issues) which will open in Fall 2013. The faculty director will offer a seminar “Gender & Sexuality in the Media” which will provide the academic framework for the learning community.
 - Began planning of the 10th (and final MIU-funded) Bio House Learning Community, to open in Fall 2014. A faculty director was selected and the Institute for Biology Education is the academic co-sponsor of the learning community.
 - Added Nordic Language program to the International Learning Community.
 - Offered 75 unique seminars in conjunction with residential learning communities that enrolled 964 students. The average class size was 13 students per instructor.
 - Contributed opportunities for students to participate in high impact practices including service learning (7 RLCs, 482 participants, peer mentoring (3 RLCs, 35 students), internships (6 RLCs, 66 students), diversity/global learning experiences (8 RLCs, 4007 students).
 - Observed that student interest in residential learning communities is stronger than ever based on the number of students who ranked an RLC as their number 1 housing choice when prioritizing preferences for residence hall assignments. The number of students interested in living in a residential learning community is 13% greater than the current capacity. Interest is greater than capacity for 2/3 of RLCs.
 - Assessment: Examined retention and graduation rates of residential learning community students and compared them to all students. Evidence that participating in a residential learning community contributes to desirable student outcomes can be seen in the retention and graduation rates of participating students, both of which are higher than the overall retention and graduation rates.
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