

Motion to the Faculty Senate on Equitable Funding for Residential Learning Communities  
May 2019

*Preamble.*

In the last several years, the University of Vermont has expanded the use of Residential Learning Communities (RLC) as a way of promoting student engagement in the intellectual projects of university life, as well as a tool for enhancing the retention of students. According to the Residential Life website, “Learning Communities are built around a common theme, faculty engagement, and easily accessible events coordinated by a dedicated program staff.” They include a course in which students are required to register in order to be a part of the RLC. In six of the seven RLCs, this course is a one-credit course; in the Wellness Environment, there is a three-credit course, COMU 001 (Healthy Brains Healthy Bodies).

While students come from different socioeconomic backgrounds, and bring different skills and interests to their time at the University of Vermont, as a general principle, students should have equal access to the resources of the university. Therefore, programs that students are required to participate in should be organized and funded in an equitable manner.

The Faculty Senate under the authority of the Board of Trustees is empowered to “Review and Establish Policies with respect to...All curricular matters, including the establishment, dissolution and potential changes of degree programs” (1.1.b). It is also empowered to “Review, Recommend and participate in the formulation of policy with regard to the Allocation and utilization of the University’s human, fiscal and physical resources” and the “Academic organization...of the general university and college academic structure” (1.2.b and 1.2.c) ([https://www.uvm.edu/faculty\\_senate/faculty\\_senate\\_constitution\\_and\\_bylaws](https://www.uvm.edu/faculty_senate/faculty_senate_constitution_and_bylaws)). Although residential life is not the same as the direct curricular program of the university, the two are closely related, and have an important effect on each other. This is particularly the case with the RLCs which are directed by University faculty, and have the clear goal of improving the academic success of students.

*Proposed Resolution:*

The proposal has several portions:

First, as a matter of policy, the body of the Faculty Senate resolves that all RLCs be funded on an equitable basis;

Second, that the work of courses linked to RLCs should be consistent across the RLCs (for example, they should have the same number of credits);

Third, that a system of oversight for RLCs be established which includes members of the faculty;

Fourth, we direct Senate and administrative bodies responsible for organizing the RLCs to return to the Faculty Senate in Fall 2019 with possible proposals to resolve these inequities before the class of 2024 enter the RLC system.

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