

# Bridging Academic and Residential Experiences: UVM Learning Communities

**J. Dickinson**  
**VP for Academic Affairs and  
Student Success**



The University of Vermont

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# What are Learning Communities?

- Themed housing for first and second year students with academic engagement
  - Arts and Creativity
  - Innovation and Entrepreneurship
  - Leadership and Social Change
  - Outdoor Experience
  - Sustainability
  - Wellness Environment
  - Application/Invitation only communities: Honors College and Liberal Arts Scholars
- Includes Community Learning Model (Learning Community Team/Res Life)
  - Awareness of Self
  - Community Responsibility
  - Justice and Inclusion
  - Global Engagement

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# Integrative Learning Goals for LCs

For First Years and Sophomores, Learning Communities should:

- Build community around an academic theme
- Enhance faculty connections with students
- Create meaningful overlap between students' academic and social lives
- Be a first opportunity to integrate diverse learning experiences at UVM

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# Previous Model: 1-credit courses

- For most LCs, students were block scheduled into 1-credit courses
  - In recent years designed/led by faculty associates but taught by peer facilitators and LC staff
  - Some communities had a 3-credit course or larger curriculum (e.g. WE, HCOL, LASP)
- Offered a location for the delivery of the Community Learning Model as well as involving all students in some themed programming (e.g. summer read)
- However:
  - Course did not necessarily increase faculty contact with students through LCs
  - Students who did not participate or dropped their course were penalized
  - Based on assessment conducted by a joint Provost's Office/Faculty Senate committee in Fall 2019, the LCs were not meeting expectations for creating community/sense of belonging

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# New Model for Learning Communities: Linked 3-credit Courses

- Implementation Planning Team has Res Life, CFAS, SSC, AD, FS, and PO reps
- This year is a “transition year” with no 1-credit courses, and no linked courses
- Starting in Fall 2022, all students will be block scheduled into a 3-credit course
  - Several courses linked to each LC
  - Most will be regular offerings
  - Faculty teaching these courses can apply for course enhancement funds
  - There is a plan for students with highly scheduled first semester schedules
  - Course is block scheduled, but not required – June advising is key

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## What is new?

- 3-credit courses for all learning communities
  - Within a few years: each will have at least one Gen Ed designation or fulfill a degree requirement
- Learning community Program Directors are planning faculty engagements to fit with their semester-long Community Learning Model curriculum
- More focus on thematic engagement through academic offerings that are part of regular course planning by units, and broader types of faculty engagement
- Faculty in Residence program more formalized

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## Where we are right now:

- Finalizing linked courses with RO and working on block scheduling rules
- Planning advising documents and linked course faculty engagement
- Coordinating with Res Life on schedule for LC assignments
- LC Reads and programming planning by LCs/Orientation
- Assessment of process for determining linked courses and planning for AY 23-24

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# How to get involved/have an impact

- We are seeking faculty to serve as Faculty Affiliates
  - 2-4 hour programming commitment – a chance to have a fun, engaging, less formal
- We would love faculty volunteers to lead discussion groups on Learning Community Read during Orientation (Friday before classes begin)!
- Next fall, we will be working on identifying linked courses. If you would like your course considered, contact you Associate Dean
- Contact J. Dickinson ([jadickin@uvm.edu](mailto:jadickin@uvm.edu)) or John Sama ([jsama@uvm.edu](mailto:jsama@uvm.edu)) if you would are interested in being a faculty affiliate or leading a book discussion!



# Questions?



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