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# Basic Skills Summit



Effective Practices -  
Bridges to Implementation

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# Learning Communities and Institutional *Vision*

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An Integrated Approach to Quality  
Instruction and College Mission

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# Why Learning Communities?

1. Learning Communities are flexible
2. Learning Communities integrate faculty, staff, and student development
3. Learning Communities encourage pedagogical innovation
4. Learning Communities retain students at a higher rate
5. Learning Communities improve the student experience

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# 1. Learning Communities are flexible

- ❑ Unmodified courses with an additional course on a theme (Freshman Interest Groups)
- ❑ Linked or clustered classes in which all courses are connected by a theme
- ❑ Team-taught/paired learning communities take the link or cluster to a higher level

Malnarich, G. (2005). Learning communities and curricular reform: “Academic apprenticeships” for developmental students. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 129, 51-62.

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## 2. Learning Communities integrate faculty, staff, and student development

- According to Bruce Koller, “Learning communities create powerful synergies (an overused term but true nonetheless), subtle but meaningful improvements in the work teachers do.”
- Jan Swinton adds, “Participating in another instructor’s class, preferably in an area outside one’s own discipline, is one of the most powerful and sustained faculty development activities available to instructors.”

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### 3. Learning Communities encourage pedagogical innovation

- The interaction between courses, instructors, and pedagogies allows for innovation across the curriculum
- Learning communities can be viewed as a constantly evolving and viable resource for increased innovation individually and institutionally.

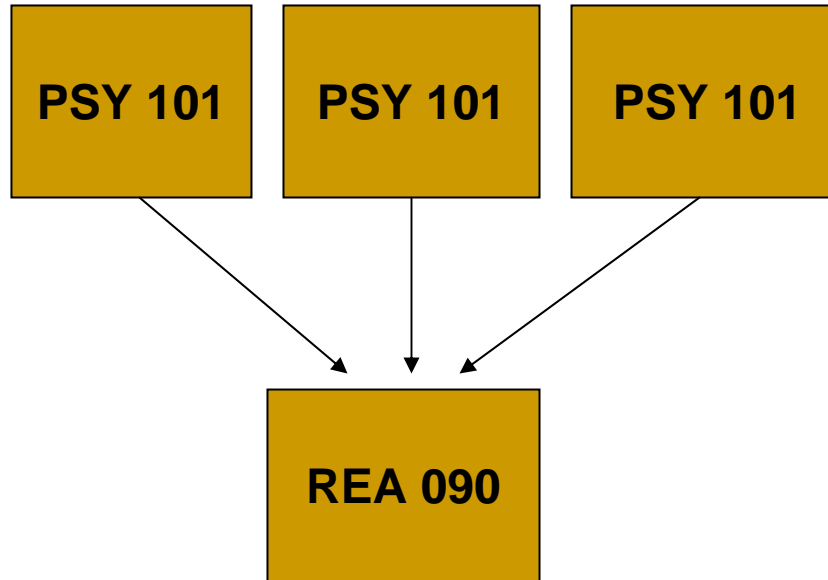
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# At FRCC Westminster, currently we have three models

- Linked/ Two Instructors
    - REA/ PSY
    - ENG/ HIS
  - Paired/ Two Instructors
    - ENG/ HUM
  - Paired/ One Instructor
    - ENG/ REA
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# Linked/ Two Instructors

**LINKED**



Why???

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# Paired/ Two Instructors

**PAIRED**

<b>HUM 121</b>	<b>ENG 090</b>
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Why???

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# Paired/ One Instructor

**PAIRED**

<b>ENG 060</b>	<b>REA 060</b>
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Why???

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# At FRCC Larimer, we have implemented two models

- Paired/two instructors
    - ENG 090/LIT 115 (Hybrid: Online 1 day a week)
    - ENG 090/POS 111
  - Paired/one instructor, *accelerated*  
ENG 060/ENG 090
  - Fall 2008
    - ENG 090/LIT 115
    - ENG 090/POS 111
    - ENG 090/PSY 101
    - ENG 090/HUM 121
    - ENG 090/PHI 111
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## 4. Learning Communities retain students at a higher rate than stand-alone courses

- To summarize the 2006 results of the Lumina Project,
  - Individuals in the basic learning community were not retained at a higher rate than those in the comparison group. However, the advanced intervention group had a **33.4% higher retention rate** than its comparison group.
  - Each intervention group had a **45.7% higher successful course completion rate** than its respective comparison group.
  - The basic intervention group had an **85.3% higher successful course completion rate** than the basic comparison group and the advanced intervention group had a **67.7% higher successful course completion rate** than its comparison group.
  - Each intervention group had a higher semester GPA than its respective comparison group.

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## 5. Learning Communities improve the student experience

- Student feedback from ENG 090/LIT 115, Fall 2007:
    - “Yes, I always recommend the Learning Community to other students. I love having both teachers in both of the classes. I also like how the classes work together because it makes it less difficult to comprehend assignments and discussions. I would definitely take another Learning Community in the future.”
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## 5. Learning Communities improve the student experience

- Student feedback from ENG 090/LIT 115, Fall 2007:
    - “The Learning Community has been a great experience. It was easier for me to understand English and Literature concepts when they are taught together. It was fun to be able to write papers on things we were learning about and reading about in Literature. I would recommend it to anyone who struggles with these concepts and needs both classes.”
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## 5. Learning Communities improve the student experience

- Student feedback from ENG 090/LIT 115, Fall 2007:
    - “This learning community has made class so much fun. I learn something new everyday of this class. Having the two teachers makes it easier to get help when I need it. I hope that there will be more classes like this in many more subjects. I feel that I have an advantage over students who are not taking these classes together.”
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## 5. Learning Communities improve the student experience

- Student feedback from ENG 090/HUM 121, Fall 2007:
    - “I’ve become more verbal in the process of taking the class too. You wouldn’t realize it but I rarely speak out in classes; for some reason I only do it in yours... It feels like a safe environment where I can express my thoughts and opinions freely to the class. I hope I will take another class like it in the future.”
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## 5. Learning Communities improve the student experience

- Student feedback from ENG 090/HUM 121, Fall 2007:
    - “I am very committed to taking these new skills and applying them not only to my next level English course but also to the rest of my classes. I have discovered new writing skills and I have all intention to use them throughout college and beyond.”
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## 5. Learning Communities improve the student experience

- Student feedback from ENG 090/HUM 121, Fall 2007:
    - “I will never forget my first semester in college; these two courses were a huge part of why I now love college. These courses also helped in my decision to continue on in my educational studies.”
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## 5. Learning Communities improve the student experience

- Student feedback from REA 090/PSY 101, Fall 2007:
    - “I will definitely take annotating to the rest of my classes, even if it seems silly, such as in a basic math class. I am sure it can help me better understand the material.”
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## 5. Learning Communities improve the student experience

- Student feedback from REA 090/PSY 101, Fall 2007:
    - “Highlighting, summarizing chapters, and organizing lecture and text notes is something that I learned a lot about this semester and I plan to take this skill with me in most of my future classes.”
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## 5. Learning Communities improve the student experience

- Student feedback from REA 090/PSY 101, Fall 2007:
    - “I honestly think that in a way I am a whole new me. I just glance at my notebook and this is the first time in my life that I have filled a spiral notebook with cluttered notes that actually mean something.”
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# Defining Success

- Students in developmental learning communities need to be challenged
  - This model provides an opportunity for student support and academic rigor
  - Students who have a positive experience and fail may be more likely to re-take the course and at the same institution
  - What are the skills sets, apart from grades, that students require to function in the world?
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# Questions?

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# References

- MacGregor, J., & Smith, B.L. (2005). Where are learning communities now?: National leaders take stock. *About Campus*, May-June, 2-8.
- Malnarich, G. (2005). Learning communities and curricular reform: “Academic apprenticeships” for developmental students. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 129, 51-62.
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