Learning Communities
Division of Student Affairs
Iowa State University

Dr. Jen Leptien, Director of Learning Communities
Kyle Holtman, Assistant Director of Learning Communities
The purpose of this survey was to understand how learning community (LC) participation is related to students’ perceptions of their knowledge and/or abilities, their experiences, and their overall satisfaction.

The survey was distributed to all fall 2020 LC participants (N = 5,738). Participants received an individualized link via the Qualtrics survey platform on November 2, 2020, with one reminder email sent on November 8. The survey closed on November 13 with a total of 491 responses, for a response rate of 8.5%.

The following sections will provide further insight into students and their experiences.

Participant Data p. 3

Quantitative Responses

Transition to College p. 4
Learning and Connections p. 5
Residential Experience p. 6
Oral and Written Communication p. 7
Critical Thinking and Time Management p. 8
Teamwork p. 9
Self-Understanding and Careers p. 10
Overall Satisfaction p. 11

Qualitative Responses

Reason for Joining a LC p. 12
Most Disappointing Aspect p. 13
Most Satisfying Aspect p. 14
The LC General Survey ran from November 2 through November 12. A total of 5,740 participants were included, with 491 surveys completed prior to the deadline, for a response rate of 8.6%.

*Participation by LC College includes duplicate counts for LCs in departments housed in more than one college.

### Participation by LC College*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CALS</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUS</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DES</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGR</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAS</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTER</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Race/Ethnicity

- 83.60% Alaska Native
- 3.37% American Indian/Native American/First Nation
- 2.37% Asian/Asian American
- 4.15% Black/African American
- 4.15% Hispanic, Latino/a/x, or Chicano/a/x
- 0.79% Middle Eastern
- 0.79% Native Hawaiian
- 0.21% South Asian
- 0.21% White/European American
- 2.37% A racial/ethnic identity not listed here
- 0.40% Prefer not to answer

### Gender Identity

- 67.01% Woman
- 31.55% Man
- 1.24% Transgender
- 0.82% Non-binary
- 0.21% Prefer not to answer
My participation in a learning community has improved:

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

- my knowledge of issues and problems facing the world.
- my understanding of diverse cultures and values.
- my ability to effectively and comfortably interact with people from diverse cultures.
- my participation in study groups.
- my communication with professors.
- my opportunities to become more involved in community activities (volunteering, service-learning,...)
- my ability to get to know students who have similar interests.
- my awareness of resources on campus.
- my connections to clubs and other university activities.
- the quality of my overall experiences at ISU.
- my adjustment to academic challenges.
- my interest in continuing my education at ISU.
- my sense of social support at ISU.
- my opportunity to interact with ISU faculty and staff.
- my sense of belonging in the ISU community.
My participation in a learning community has helped me to:

- Connect with leadership opportunities on campus.
- Become involved in service-learning activities.
- Improve my study skills.
- Find support for helping my learning.
- Practice the skills I am learning or have learned.
- Apply what I learn in class to real-world problems.
- Better understand the nature of my anticipated major.
- See connections between my personal experiences and class learning.
- Connect with leadership opportunities on campus.
- Interact with ISU faculty and staff.
- See connections among my classes (e.g., learning in one class supported or expanded on what I learned in another class).
For the 20-21 academic year, there were 19 LCs with a residential component. Of the Students included on Department of Residence LC rosters, 95 received the following response options.

My learning community residential living experience helped me to:

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

get to know students with similar interests.

adjust to the university environment.

become more active in learning community activities.

participate in study groups.

form friendships.
My learning community experience improved my:

- comfort with asking questions in classes.
- confidence in participating in class discussions.
- ability to argue a point of view assertively.
- ability to make formal class presentations.

My learning community experience improved my ability to:

- organize my written communication.
- write the types of technical, critical, review, or creative papers typical for my discipline with a grade of B or better.
- produce well-written papers that would receive a grade of B or better.
My learning community experience improved my:

- effort to think about ideas and arguments different from my own.
- ability to think of different ways to solve problems.
- ability to apply academic knowledge and reason to current problems.
- ability to analyze and critically evaluate ideas.

My learning community experience improved my ability to:

- coordinate multiple tasks or projects.
- prioritize tasks needed to reach a goal.
- manage my time effectively.
My learning community experience improved my ability to:

- work cooperatively and productively with others.
- effectively listen to, understand, and respond to others.
- interact with others and contribute to group discussions.
- identify and prioritize team goals.
- bring people with different viewpoints together to cooperate on a project.
- facilitate group interactions.
My learning community experience:

- improved my ability to identify my personal strengths.
- improved my awareness of how I learn best.
- provided experiences that have helped me define my goals as a student.

My learning community experience:

- enhanced my knowledge of career choices and options in my anticipated discipline or field of study.
- helped me identify skills that are needed for my future career.
- helped me develop connections with professionals from my career area of interest.
Overall Satisfaction

Satisfaction with the academic aspects of your LC

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Satisfaction with the social activities in your LC

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Overall satisfaction with your LC experience

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Would you recommend joining a LC to a friend or prospective student?

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
Reason for Joining a LC

Predominant themes:

• Required experience: 102
• Meeting people with similar interests: 95
• Resources: 35
• Academic support: 34
• It was recommended: 23
• Finding friends: 20
• To confirm interest in a major: 18
• Adjust to college: 17
• Career exploration: 8

To get more involved at ISU, to challenge me more, and also to be able to live with other students whose goals were similar to mine.

I was originally unaware of all the benefits of a learning community, but my roommate influenced my decision to join. After joining, I realized how beneficial it was in order to become familiar with everything Iowa State had to offer.

I am a transfer student and knew the transition to a much larger college would be tough. I wanted to do anything that would make the transition easier for me, and it definitely did.

I chose to join a learning community to help me be more comfortable with not knowing exactly what major I wanted to be in, as well as collaborate and meet others in the same boat as myself.

I joined to make connections with people that have similar interests as me. This was really helpful this year because I wasn't able to make friends in class.
Predominant themes:

- Lack of connection: 94
- Nothing/Not applicable: 71
- General Covid-19 impact: 48
- Lack of relevant work: 39
- Lack of events: 38
- Lack of study groups: 10

I wish that we would have been able to do things in person this year, but that was unfortunately not a safe option given the state of the coronavirus.

Not being able to have more in-person events and having study groups to be able to study for classes that we may struggle with.

It was all online and my work felt like busywork and not actually beneficial to me.

We have not had any social events for our learning community, so it doesn't feel like we are part of a learning community.

I think the limitations set by Covid-19 made this a very different experience than it would normally be.

Not being able to do as much with our Learning community because of Covid. If not for Covid, it would've been a great semester.
Predominant themes:

- Outlet for socialization: 106
- Networking: 43
- Learning about opportunities within major/career field: 36
- Nothing/Not applicable: 35
- Group events/activities: 32
- Making friends: 31
- Learning from peer mentors: 28
- Learning from coordinators, instructors, and advisors: 22
- Learning about campus resources: 17

I enjoyed being in groups with students who could relate to me and not feeling so alone.

The many guest speakers and activities and presentations that the class provided was great insight for me and my desired profession!

Connecting with other students on a professional and personal level as we go through the similar classes.

I think being able to connect with such great peer mentors, that have been in your shoes (sort of). I also like that I have been able to sort of connect with the other mentees in our group in order to seek help or clarification on things in some of our other classes, and kind of put me at ease knowing that they are also in other classes with me. Kind of like a reminder that you are not alone, in these very isolating times.

The most satisfying aspect of my learning community is getting to find people that share the same interests as me. It helps develop friendships even with the struggles of Covid-19.

I have made some of my closest friends through the learning community.