

John C. Smart  
Michael B. Paulsen  
*Editors*

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# Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research

Volume 26

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# Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research

Volume XXVI

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# Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research

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Volume 26

 Springer

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# Chapter 1

## Undergraduate Living–Learning Programs and Student Outcomes

Karen Kurotsuchi Inkelas and Matthew Soldner

### Introduction and Outline of Chapter

Attempts to improve American undergraduate education—particularly at large research universities—have spawned a number of programmatic interventions designed to facilitate stronger student outcomes, including service learning programs, study abroad options of varying durations in various locations, undergraduate research, and a number of different types of learning communities (Kuh, 2008; The Boyer Commission, 1998). As each of these interventions gained in popularity, college campuses around the country scrambled to introduce them as part of their institutional offerings. All feature the fusion of traditional classroom learning with out-of-class immersions that purportedly enable students to apply their learning in different settings, critically analyze new information and perspectives, and deepen their intellectual curiosity (Kuh). However, another common feature of these interventions is a lack of a systematic focus of research on their effectiveness in delivering the student learning outcomes they are designed to promote. Instead, the literature on these interventions is varied: some empirical, some conceptual, some philosophical, and some practical.

In this chapter, we more closely examine one intervention, the living–learning program, and the student outcomes that have been associated with this type of program. Most generically, living–learning programs (LLPs) are *residence hall-based* undergraduate programs with a particular topical or academic theme. However, in the next section we describe the various methods we use to provide a more comprehensive definition. Following the conceptual description of LLPs, we summarize the historical roots and philosophical underpinnings of the modern LLP. We then turn to descriptions of the core traits that authors have ascribed to LLPs in what can be labeled “best practices” literature.

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We concentrate in the next section of the chapter on the empirical literature investigating the relationship between LLPs and a number of student outcomes, including academic performance, persistence, intellectual development, faculty and peer interaction, the transition to college, campus life, satisfaction, academic engagement and co-curricular involvement, attitudes and beliefs, self-efficacy, and psychosocial development. We then critique the current body of literature on LLPs, focusing first on the empirical literature and then on the practitioner works. Finally, we conclude the chapter with recommendations for future research and practice.

## **Defining Living–Learning Programs Within a Learning Community Typology**

A precise definition of a living–learning program is elusive. Indeed, the terminology for LLPs can be confusing as well. Living–learning programs may also be known as residential learning communities, living–learning communities, living–learning centers, theme houses, or residential colleges but will be referred to in this chapter as living–learning programs, or LLPs. One way, perhaps, to better define LLPs is to nest them within the broader learning community structure that encompasses them.

### ***Learning Community Typologies***

Living–learning programs are one type of learning community. Learning communities have been described as curricular linkages that provide students with a deeper examination and integration of themes or concepts that they are learning (Gabelnick, MacGregor, Matthews, & Smith, 1990; Shapiro & Levine, 1999). Learning communities, like living–learning programs, can take several forms. The first to attempt to provide a typology of the different types of learning communities was Gabelnick et al. (1990). Subsequent learning community typologies are either combinations of the Gabelnick et al.’s categories or departure points from their version. Gabelnick et al. described five different variations of learning communities, with each subsequent variation being more structurally complex than its predecessor. The first type, “linked courses,” is simply two courses that students co-register for in consecutive terms. The faculty in these courses coordinate their curricula in some way, such as sharing reading lists or linking assignments. “Learning clusters” can be considered to be expanded versions of the linked course. Now, instead of merely two courses, students co-enroll in a series of courses over a given semester or year that are connected in some way. The third type of learning community is called the “freshman interest group,” or FIG, which takes a similar form to the learning cluster but—as suggested by its name—caters directly to first-year students and thus incorporates other programmatic elements to assist with the transition to college, such as “big buddies” or peer advisors and close ties to student support services.

The fourth type, “federated learning communities,” consists of multi-disciplinary course clusters organized around a topic, for example, world poverty or technology

and ethics. Students co-enroll in a series of courses in different disciplines that are related to the overarching theme and a “master learner,” or faculty member who is not an instructor for any of the related courses, participates in the curriculum alongside the students and assists them with integrating the different course materials. The final model in Gabelnick et al.’s typology is “coordinated studies.” In this model, students and faculty alike become fully immersed in a particular theme: students *only* register for these courses in a given time period and faculty members *only* teach topics related to this theme. Gabelnick et al. provided a detailed table (pp. 32–37) outlining all five types of learning communities in their book, including their definitions, basic instructional techniques, appropriate size for student cohorts, faculty roles, and community issues. Interestingly, in this earliest effort to create a typology, the authors provided no type or model representing the residence hall-based learning community (i.e., a living–learning program).

Nine years later, Shapiro and Levine (1999) provided a new typology of learning communities that did incorporate a residential model. The first type, “paired or clustered courses,” is a combination of the first two types within the Gabelnick et al.’s (1990) typology. Similarly, the authors combined two more of Gabelnick et al.’s types (and federated learning communities) to create their second type: “cohorts in large courses.” Next, Shapiro and Levine encompassed Gabelnick et al.’s final type (coordinated studies) within a broader category called “team-taught programs.” The authors depart from Gabelnick et al., however, with their final type, “residence-based programs.” Shapiro and Levine define the residence-based program as one that “adapt(s) a particular curricular model to include a residential component,” with the primary goal of the program being “the integration of students’ living and academic environments” (p. 36).

In the same year that Shapiro and Levine (1999) published their learning community typology, Lenning and Ebbers (1999) offered a very different type of typology in their monograph. The Lenning and Ebbers’s version includes four primary categories: (a) “curricular learning communities”; (b) “classroom learning communities”; (c) “student-type learning communities”; and (d) “residential learning communities.” They further subdivide the first two categories: under curricular learning communities, there are (a) cross-curricular learning communities; (b) curricular cohort learning communities; and (c) curricular area learning communities. For classroom learning communities, there can be (a) total-classroom learning communities and (b) within-classroom learning communities.

Lenning and Ebbers (1999) described curricular learning communities as those which are typically interdisciplinary and involve some type of integration of concepts across individual courses or themes. They assert that all five types of Gabelnick et al.’s (1990) learning communities can be constituted as “cross-curricular learning communities” or those that restructure the curriculum so that individual classes or coursework within those classes are linked for greater coherence and enhanced student learning. Curricular cohort learning communities, on the other hand, were described as, essentially, mini-degree programs, where students take a series of courses together as a cohort in lock-step progression. Finally, curricular area learning communities combined traditional

disciplinary coursework in an academic major with out-of-class discussion or study groups.

Classroom learning communities, in Lenning and Ebbers's (1999) typology, consisted of communities of support and learning within one class. This can be accomplished, the authors asserted, in two fashions: (a) a total-classroom learning community, or a class that behaves much like a community—with supportive peers and instructors that see their role as facilitators more than teachers; and/or (b) a within-classroom learning community, or a system through which small groups are formed within a larger class—such as group work, team learning, or collaborative projects. The third type of learning community in the Lenning and Ebbers's typology is the student-type learning community, which tends to focus less on academic topics or themes and more on the types of students the programs cater to, such as underrepresented groups or academically talented students. Like Shapiro and Levine (1999), Lenning and Ebbers (1999) do include a residence hall-based program in their typology: the "residential learning community." In their description of the residential learning community, they referenced several examples of programs at various universities, including residential colleges, residential FIGs, residential honors programs, and various academic themes within a residential component. However, they stopped short of attempting to categorize the different types of LLPs.

The third learning community typology published in 1999 was provided by Love and Tokuno. Their typology mimics three of Shapiro and Levine's (1999) categories, including "paired or clustered courses," "student cohorts in larger classes," and "team-taught programs." However, their major contribution to learning community typology development is the introduction of the "learning community for special populations." Similar to Lenning and Ebbers's (1999) "student-type learning communities," the focus of this category of programs is on the type of students the program caters to, and not its academic theme or topic. Indeed, when describing their "student-type learning communities," Lenning and Ebbers directly allude to the more thorough treatment that Love and Tokuno provide for this type of programming.

Love and Tokuno (1999) identify six types of programming for special student populations: (a) academically underprepared students; (b) students from underrepresented groups; (c) students with disabilities; (d) honors programs; (e) residential students; (f) students with specific academic interests. Learning communities for academically underprepared students function primarily to assist these at-risk students through review courses, basic skills training, and in-depth academic advising. Programs for students from underrepresented groups typically focus on issues and topics relating to people from a specific social background (e.g., African-Americans) and incorporate a mentoring or networking program among members of the campus community who share a similar background. Communities for students with disabilities are designed to help students with physical, psychiatric, or learning disabilities meet their educational needs through support services, awareness and sensitivity training for campus constituents, and academic accommodations. Honors programs generally work with students that their campuses have designated

as high-ability or academically talented. These programs typically offer special courses or seminars open only to Honors students.

Love and Tokuno (1999) place “residential students” and “students with specific academic interests” as the final two groupings under the category of programming for special student populations. However, their descriptions of these types of programs tend to mirror what we believe are more representative of other categories previously described in other typologies as residential learning communities or curricular learning communities. Love and Tokuno describe “residential student” learning communities as those which “take the learning community concept into the residence halls, blurring the lines between in- and out-of-class learning” (p. 15). Thus, the primary distinction of this type of programming in their typology is that the community is situated in a residential setting, which appears consistent with the way in which Lenning and Ebbers (1999) and Shapiro and Levine (1999) define the “residential learning community.” Finally, Love and Tokuno define communities of “students with specific academic interests” as those which group together students of the same academic major (e.g., engineering). Students in these programs not only take the same classes over a defined period of time but also participate in co-curricular activities designed to complement topics in their major classes. Depending upon the extent of the coordination among the various courses in the major, as well as among the co-curricular activities, this type of program appears to be consistent with Lenning and Ebbers’s description of the “curricular learning community.”

Finally, the same combination of authors from the Gabelnick et al.’s (1990) work provided an updated typology in Smith, MacGregor, Matthews, and Gabelnick (2004) which appears to integrate many of the typologies introduced since their 1990 version. First, they combined some of their original categories and changed some of their terminologies to match subsequent authors’ works: “linked or clustered courses” became one category, FIGs were subsumed under a new category called “learning communities within courses that are unmodified,” along with freshman seminars and colloquia, or other types of integrative courses, and “team-taught learning communities” appears to draw from terminology used in Shapiro and Levine (1999) and Love and Tokuno (1999). Smith et al. also add some new categories absent from their 1990 typology in the 2004 version, including “curricular cohort programs,” for which they directly reference Lenning and Ebbers’s (1999) typology. Finally, they added five other categories, including a residential category called “living–learning communities,” thus compensating for its omission from the 1990 version.

In sum, typologies of learning communities have been advanced over the past 20 years, with subsequent authors refining, re-categorizing, and creating new types of learning communities based on programs they had encountered or observed in their work. While the first attempt at a learning community typology (Gabelnick et al., 1990) did not include LLPs, all subsequent typologies included some version of the residence hall-based learning community (Lenning & Ebbers, 1999; Love & Tokuno, 1999; Shapiro & Levine, 1999). Moreover, even the same authors who excluded LLPs in their original typology saw fit to include these programs in their

updated typology 14 years later (Smith et al., 2004). Yet, each of the above typologies used different terminology to represent LLPs, and none attempted to classify the different types of LLPs in existence around the country (for a visual representation of the five learning community typologies and the overlap among them, see Fig. 1.1). With its varied treatment within the learning community literature, it is not surprising to learn that the definition and the acknowledgment of the different types of living-learning programs in existence are not well understood by researchers and practitioners alike.

### *Living-Learning Program Typologies*

More recent efforts have begun to address the omissions and confusion associated with some of the earlier work on *living-learning* typologies. The first two of these originated in the practitioner literature. Zeller, James, and Klippenstein (2002) identified several types of programs that aim to help students draw connections between their formal classroom and out-of-class experiences which take place in a residence hall setting. These include (a) residential colleges; (b) living-learning centers; (c) theme housing; (d) residential learning communities; and (e) the freshman year experience. Residential colleges are based upon the British model of postsecondary education, in which students and faculty live and work together on typically liberal arts types of educational endeavors (described in greater detail later in this chapter). Living-learning centers were described as residential programs with strong academic program partnerships, such as foreign language programs or pre-med programs. Theme housing provided an opportunity for students with similar interests or hobbies to live together. Typically, these types of programs provide little-to-no academic or disciplinary content. Residential learning communities, on the other hand, were described as programs in which clusters of students not only live together but also take many of their first-year classes together as well. Finally, freshman year experience programs focused on the facilitation of a successful transition to college. One might note that these descriptions are very similar to their broader learning community counterparts; the only difference is that all of these types of programs exist within the residence hall setting.

Schoem (2004) introduced a three-pronged typology of living-learning programs, composed of residential colleges, residential learning communities, and residential education programs. Residential colleges, based on the Oxford/Cambridge classic model, are commonly characterized as multi-year, focusing on a liberal arts education, with faculty and students living together in the residence hall. Residential learning communities, on the other hand, link models of learning communities (e.g., FIGs or clustered courses) with a residential component. They can be one year or multi-year and often also include a co-curricular component that is linked to the learning community. Finally, residential education programs bring students with common interests together in the same residential setting and may provide co-curricular activities and faculty involvement in the program. They do not, however, feature the residential college tradition, or integrate a learning community model.

Gabelnick et al. (1990)	Shapiro & Levine (1999)	Lenning & Ebbers (1999)	Love & Tokuno (1999)	Smith et al. (2004)
Linked Courses	Paired or Clustered Courses		Paired or Clustered Courses	Learning Communities of Linked or Clustered Courses
Learning Clusters				
Freshman Interest Groups (FIGs)	Cohorts in Large Courses	Curricular Learning Communities, including: (a) <i>Cross-curricular LCs</i>	Student Cohorts in Larger Classes	Learning Communities within Courses that are Unmodified (a) Freshman Seminar or Interest Group (b) Integrative Seminar or Colloquy
Federated Learning Communities	Team-Taught Programs		Team-Taught Programs	Team-Taught Learning Communities
Coordinated Studies		(b) <i>Curricular Cohort LCs</i> (c) <i>Curricular Area LCs</i>		Curricular Cohort Programs
		Classroom Learning Communities, including: (a) <i>Total-Classroom LCs</i> (b) <i>Within-Classroom LCs</i>		
		Student Type Learning Communities of Love & Tokuno (1999)	Learning Communities for Special Populations, including: (a) <i>Academically Underprepared Students</i> (b) <i>Students from Underrepresented Groups</i> (c) <i>Students with Disabilities</i> (d) <i>Honors Programs</i> (e) <i>Residential Students*</i> (f) <i>Students with Specific Academic Interests*</i>	
	Residence-Based Programs	Residential Learning Communities Examples provided include: (1) <i>Residential Colleges</i> (2) <i>Residential FIGs</i> (3) <i>Honors</i> (4) <i>Various Academic Themes</i>		Living-Learning Communities
				Additional Co-Curricular Elements
				Sequential Course LCs
				Multiple LC Structures on a Single Campus
				Fixed-Content and Variable-Content LCs

**Fig. 1.1** Comparison of learning community typologies (\*While Love and Tokuno placed these two types of programs in this cell, the authors believe that they are more similar to other categories in the figure)

However, Inkelas and Associates (2004, 2007) provided two more comprehensive typologies of living–learning programs, and importantly, their typologies remain—to date—the only empirically derived typologies in the living–learning *or* learning community literature. The authors have developed two different thematic typologies of LLPs, based on two different data collections. The 2004 thematic typology was based on programmatic information provided by 297 LLPs under the auspices of the 2004 National Study of Living–Learning Programs (NSLLP), a Spring 2004 data collection at 34 different postsecondary institutions across the United States. Using the name of the LLP and its 50-word description provided by the institutions, one rater sorted 247 LLPs into 14 primary categories, with sub-types beneath some categories. In all, there were 26 total LLP thematic types in the 2004 analysis.

The 2007 Inkelas and Associates thematic typology was built upon the original 26 primary and sub-types of categories in the 2004 version but utilized a significantly more rigorous method of analysis. Using information from 611 LLPs participating in the NSLLP data collection in Spring 2007, a team of six raters examined three data elements: (a) the program’s name; (b) the program’s stated goals and objectives; and (c) the program’s ratings of the relative importance of 17 pre-selected learning outcomes. Each rater independently categorized the 611 LLPs into one of the existing 26 categories from the 2004 typology, or created new categories to accommodate distinctive programs that were not reflected in the 2004 version. Eventually, the raters reached consensus regarding the thematic type of 555 LLPs in the 2007 data, emerging with 17 primary categories and 41 types in total, including sub-types. This thorough analysis also resulted in a few changes to, and improvements in, the original 2004 typology as well. The descriptions below represent the most recent 17 groupings within the Inkelas and Associates LLP typology, in alphabetical order:

1. “Civic/social leadership programs.” These LLPs focused on public service or active participation in the political process. There are four sub-types within this category, including (a) civic engagement programs, which emphasize engaging students in civic issues, primarily through political activism or service; (b) environmental sustainability programs, concerned with promoting ecological action, (c) leadership programs, focusing on leadership development, and (d) service-learning and social justice programs, which promote civic engagement largely through social responsibility.
2. “Cultural programs.” These programs stressed cultural understanding and appreciation, and are subdivided into three types: (a) international/global programs, which may focus on a single country or a region, or more broadly may emphasize international affairs, (b) language programs, which aim to help develop students’ linguistic and cultural proficiency in a foreign language, and (c) multicultural/diversity programs, which focus on domestic diversity issues such as race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, or other social identities.
3. “Disciplinary programs.” This large grouping of LLPs clustered students together by similar majors or disciplinary interests. There are 11 sub-types in

this category: (a) agriculture or veterinary medicine, (b) business, (c) communication or journalism, (d) education, (e) engineering and computer science, (f) general science, (g) humanities, (h) interdisciplinary, (i) law or criminal justice, (j) mathematics, or (k) the social sciences.

4. “Fine and creative arts programs.” These LLPs focused on promoting appreciation and interest in the visual arts, music, architecture, film, prose, or photography. And, because of their prevalence, culinary arts is included as a sub-type within this grouping.
5. “General academic programs.” These programs offered general academic support but did not feature any particular disciplinary theme (e.g., engineering or history), nor did they serve a particular group (e.g., first-year students, transfer students).
6. “Honors programs.” Honors LLPs provided an academically enriched learning environment for an institution’s academically talented students. Typically, students are invited to participate in these programs, based on prior high school achievement indicators (e.g., high school GPA or standardized test scores).
7. “Leisure programs.” These LLPs generally offered little-to-no academic content and instead centered on recreational activities. The three sub-types in this category included the following: (a) general leisure pursuits, examples including playing card games or World Cup enthusiasts, (b) local community exploration, or programs that focused on learning about leisure or cultural activities nearby their campuses, especially those in an urban center, and (c) outdoor recreation, offering students an opportunity to develop sporting or outdoor/wilderness skills.
8. “Political interest programs.” Participants in this LLP type discussed domestic political issues and supplemented their learning through media outlets. Typically, though, community service or service learning was not emphasized.
9. “Research programs.” Students in this type of LLP participated in faculty-guided research or peer team-based projects.
10. “Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) programs.” All members of this LLP type were in either the Army, the Navy, or the Air Force ROTC groups at their (or a host) institution.
11. “Residential colleges.” These types of programs varied somewhat by structure, but they generally spanned multiple years of the college experience and attempted to re-create an early-American liberal arts focus on academic, cultural, and social pursuits.
12. “Sophomore programs.” These types of LLPs focused on the continuing needs of students in their second year of college.
13. “Transition programs.” Transition LLPs assisted undergraduate students in their adaptation to university life and were further divided into the following sub-types: (a) career or major exploration, focusing on academic and vocational investigation, (b) first-year student programs, which assisted first-year students on their college transitions, (c) new student transition programs for diverse populations, which served the transition needs of students from non-dominant backgrounds (e.g., first-generation college students, LGBT students),

- and (d) transfer student programs, focusing on the transition experience of students who transferred to an institution from a two- or four-year college.
14. “Umbrella programs.” These types of LLPs typically housed several, potentially distinct communities without disaggregating those communities by theme. For example, a “living–learning center” might incorporate under its administrative structure eight different communities of students, each focusing on a separate disciplinary or social issue.
  15. “Upper division programs.” These programs served the needs and interests of juniors and seniors, and may have included components that prepare students for post-graduate study or workforce entry.
  16. “Wellness programs.” These programs often focused on physical and psychological healthy living, and were subdivided into two types: (a) general wellness and healthy living and (b) spirituality and faith based, which emphasized issues of personal spirituality or the formal study of religion.
  17. “Women’s programs.” This final category of LLPs focused on women’s development and were represented by two sub-types of programs: (a) women’s leadership programs, which promoted women’s roles as leaders in society and the workforce and (b) women-only science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) programs, which worked to combat the underrepresentation of women in STEM through a single-sex living environment designed to facilitate communal support and networking.

For more information about the above typology, see Inkelas and Associates (2007).

Finally, Inkelas, Soldner, Longerbeam, and Brown Leonard (2008) offer a different kind of LLP typology, based not on programmatic themes but instead on programmatic structures. In combination, both substantive and structural typologies are necessary to provide a truly comprehensive portrayal of the distinguishing characteristics of different types of LLPs. Using the 2004 NSLLP data, the authors conducted a two-step cluster analysis to sort 297 LLPs into statistically derived groupings using the following LLP structural components: (a) program size; (b) budget source; (c) number of faculty involved in the program; (d) courses offered by the program; (e) administrative affiliation of the program’s director; (f) special resources offered by the program; and (g) co-curricular activities provided by the program. Of the 297 LLPs in the study, 207 were successfully clustered into three groupings (several of the programs not included in the final cluster analysis were all programs from the same institution that had idiosyncratic features which prevented them from clustering with other programs on other campuses). The three groupings were characterized by Inkelas et al. (2008) as follows:

1. “Small, limited resourced, primarily residential life emphasis.” These LLPs included typically less than 50 participants and were administered and funded primarily by housing or residence life units on their campuses. Thus, there was little coordination with academic departments or units, and academic resources, such as faculty involvement and advising, were scarce in this type of program.

2. “Medium, moderately resourced, student affairs/academic affairs combination.” LLPs in this grouping typically included about 100 participants and offered more resources to students (such as multicultural programming, community service opportunities, and career workshops). They also demonstrated limited partnerships with academic units (e.g., more faculty participation and academic advising options) but did not exhibit the extent of academic/student affairs collaboration as illustrated in the third grouping.
3. “Large, comprehensively resourced, student affairs/academic affairs collaboration.” This type of LLP was typically very large, averaging 343 participants, and students in these programs had access to a wide variety of resources and co-curricular activities. These programs also boasted the largest number of dedicated course offerings and affiliated faculty.

Inkelas et al. (2008) noted a few surprising findings related to their structural typology. First, they found it noteworthy that over 200 different LLPs represented in the structural typology could be reduced to only *three* structural types. Recalling that thematic typologies developed by the same team of researchers revealed over two dozen different program themes, the authors speculated that, while the themes of programs may vary from institution to institution, the way that LLPs are run—no matter the location—is remarkably similar. Second, after matching student survey data with program level data, the authors found that “bigger” is not necessarily “better.” Examining a range of self-reported student-learning outcome data, Inkelas et al. found that students in the small, limited resourced, primarily residential life (cluster 1) programs did not significantly differ from their peers in large, well-resourced, academic and student affairs collaborations (cluster 3). Interestingly, though, students in clusters 1 and 3 did outperform students in the medium, moderately resourced, student/academic affairs combination programs (cluster 2). The authors cautioned, however, that their exploratory analysis required further testing.

There were some commonalities among the thematic groupings provided by Zeller et al. (2002), Schoem (2004), and Inkelas and Associates (2004, 2007). First, of obvious note, all three typologies included and defined “residential colleges” in a similar fashion. Second, Zeller et al.’s “living–learning centers” were described analogously to Inkelas et al.’s “multi-disciplinary programs” (2004) or “umbrella programs” (2007). Third, there were strong parallels between Zeller et al.’s “freshman year experience programs” and Inkelas and Associates’ “transition programs.” Finally, one might argue that the rest of the themes uncovered in Inkelas and Associates’ (2004, 2007) thematic typologies were merely an expansion of Zeller et al.’s categories of “theme housing,” “academic residential programs,” or “residential learning communities.”

At first blush, one might also see parallels between Schoem’s (2004) typology of LLPs and the Inkelas et al.’s (2008) structural typology: the “residential education programs” (which might also be interpreted as “theme housing” by Zeller et al. (2002)) parallel the “small, limited resourced, primary residential life” programs, and as the sophistication of the programs increases in the Schoem’s typology, so does the complexity of the structural components in the Inkelas et al.’s typology.

However, it is important to distinguish that not all residential colleges can be classified as large, or comprehensively resourced, or full academic/student affairs collaborations. Moreover, the culture and tradition of the residential college distinguishes this type of program in other ways that a structural typology cannot address.

Altogether, the various LLP typologies reveal an ever-expansive portrait of living–learning programs in existence at U.S. postsecondary institutions. However, several common characteristics can be noted that may bring us closer to a definition of these programs. First—and paramount—all LLPs are residence hall-based programs, meaning that students who participate in these programs not only participate in some sort of curricular or co-curricular activity jointly but also live together in the same residence hall location. Second, the characteristics or features of several different types of LLPs mirror those of their conceptual cousins, the learning communities. Some LLPs, like their freshman interest group (FIG) learning community counterparts, strongly emphasize the transition to college for first-year students by providing resources to facilitate student success. Other LLPs focus specifically on targeted student populations, like high-talent students in Honors programs or students of color or international students in cultural programs. Many LLPs provide linked or team-taught courses as part of their curriculum. Third, while there may be numerous different *themes* among LLPs across the United States, their *structural* characteristics manifest themselves in only three essential structural types, where a specific LLP’s structural type can be discerned through an analysis of (a) the size of the program; (b) the amount of fiscal, human, and programmatic resources it contains; and (c) the extent to which there is or is not a collaboration among relevant academic and student affairs units. Although a precise definition of living–learning programs remains elusive in the literature, these common components bring into focus a sharper characterization of the contemporary LLP.

## **The Historical Development of and Rationale for Living–Learning Programs**

### ***The “Oxbridge” Residential College as the Model***

The above characteristics may exemplify modern living–learning programs, but these communities actually have strong historical legacies. Although Chaddock (2008) may trace the living–learning community back to Pythagoras in 6 BC, many observers reach back to a more recent past in the nineteenth century. Several of the first American colonial colleges were intentionally patterned after the attributes and characteristics of the two great English universities: Oxford and Cambridge. However, the early colonial colleges—largely due to financial limitations—offered either little more than sparse living chambers or no housing to students whatsoever (Chaddock). Yet, in their attempt to model the Oxford and Cambridge (or “Oxbridge”) experience, many higher education leaders in the colonial period

routinely invoked the British residential college model (Alexander, 1998). For example, Harvard President Dunster (1640–1654) was credited with promoting the following: “. . . learning alone might be got by lectures and reading; but it was only by studying and disputing, eating and drinking, playing and praying as members of the same collegiate community, in close and constant association with each other and with their tutors, that the priceless gift of character could be imparted to young men” (Morison, p. 252, as cited in Chaddock).

The “Oxbridge” residential college model included a system of residences—each equipped with commons, unions, and athletic fields—in which instructors and students lived, studied, worked, and socialized together communally (Alexander, 1998). Early colonial colleges, including Harvard, William & Mary, and Princeton, followed this pattern by constructing buildings with not only lecture halls but also dining rooms, a kitchen, a library, and sleeping quarters for students and their tutors (Ryan, 1992). Concerned not only with learning subjects but also with molding character through the “full development” of its students, students spent their entire academic experience within the same building—attending lectures, performing recitations and disputations, praying, dining, socializing, and sleeping (Ryan). Tutors lived in residence with students to oversee their learning and development. Thus, the environment in which students (and their instructors) lived was also the same as in which they learned. As can be seen in the above typologies of LLPs, postsecondary institutions across the United States continue to appropriate the residential college concept in some form to this day, but the extent to which the American versions replicate the *esprit de corps* of their original British counterparts has been debated for decades (Alexander).

Eventually, the colonial model began to give way to a more discipline-focused Germanic model of higher education at many colleges and universities in the United States in the late 1800s. The German model emphasized independent and graduate study, as well as faculty research. A college education was transformed from a largely communal phenomenon to one where students specialized in a particular professional or vocational interest, faculty focused primarily on their own scholarship, and most importantly in the history of LLPs, the role of the college residence became peripheral to the academic enterprise (Veysey, 1965; Rudolph, 1990; Ryan, 1992).

### ***Twentieth-Century Reformers***

Although the German model became the standard bearer in American higher education, particularly among the land grant universities built by the Morrill Act of 1862, it was not without its critics. Two of the most prominent critics of the early twentieth century would become key figures in the modern version of the living–learning program: John Dewey and Alexander Meiklejohn. Dewey believed that American universities needed to adopt a more progressive version of education, where students become more active agents in their own learning. He disdained the view that students were empty vessels receiving knowledge from experts. Instead,

he favored the approach where students and teachers learned collaboratively, or through “shared inquiry” (Smith et al., 2004). Indeed, several of the pedagogical terms in teaching and learning scholarship that are taken for granted now—such as active learning and student-centered learning—took their form from Dewey’s writings. In order to accomplish this progressive form of education, students and faculty would need to have a much closer relationship than was typical during that time. Moreover, community (or co-curricular) activities that reinforced students’ learning and gave them opportunities to practice skills they were learning in their curricula were strongly advocated (Smith et al.; Shapiro & Levine, 1999).

Dewey and Meiklejohn both shared in the belief that the then-current status of American higher education was deficient. Molded from Meiklejohn’s beliefs and created as an alternative version of undergraduate education at the University of Wisconsin, the Experimental College of 1927–1932 became what is widely viewed as the progenitor of the modern living–learning program (Shapiro & Levine, 1999; Smith et al., 2004; Smith & Williams, 2007). Meiklejohn (1932/2001) felt that increasing specialization among academic disciplines was leading to the intellectual and social fragmentation of the university. The Experimental College would, therefore, integrate students’ curricular, co-curricular, and residential experiences all in one setting. First and foremost, students would live together in the same hall. They would participate in a common and required curriculum focusing on democracy; yet, the courses would use novel pedagogical techniques, such as team-teaching and clustered courses. In addition, students in the Experimental College would form many of their own clubs or activities. During its existence, Meiklejohn even incorporated a field experience into the program, requiring students to conduct an analysis of how democratic principles manifested themselves in their hometowns (Meiklejohn).

The Experimental College closed after only 5 years, and in his report to the University of Wisconsin, Meiklejohn (1932/2001) highlighted several challenges that contributed to its demise: (a) allowing non-participants to live in the same residence hall as participants; (b) uneven faculty involvement arising from divided loyalties with their traditional disciplines; and (c) difficulty in enacting new policies that were vanguard to established practices of the day. Ironically, all of these issues still plague living–learning programs today!

### ***Contemporary Gatekeepers and Calls for Undergraduate Education Reform***

In addition to providing an excellent summary of Dewey and Meiklejohn’s contributions to early learning communities, Smith et al. (2004) continued their historical narrative into present day. They wrote of Joseph Tussman, who was one of Meiklejohn’s protégés, and his Experiment at Berkeley, a team-taught interdisciplinary study of democracy (albeit non-residentially based) in the 1960s. They went on to chronicle the surprisingly small circle of academics that carried on the learning community movement to San Jose State College, the State University of New

York-Old Westbury, and eventually Evergreen State College. Many of the central figures in the learning community movement were given the opportunity to plan the curriculum for this new public university in Washington state. Founded in 1969, Evergreen went through a rocky first decade but stabilized by the 1980s to become the central force behind the learning community approach to undergraduate education. With seed money from two grants, several in the Evergreen leadership looked to move their reform efforts statewide and established the Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education. The Washington Center remains a leader and central figure in the learning community movement to this day, having expanded their reach to postsecondary institutions across the United States (Smith et al.).

Like their learning community counterparts, living–learning programs exploded in popularity over the past three decades, with many campuses racing to implement LLPs to keep up with their competitive peers. Moreover, similar to learning communities, the impetus for this growth was based on several, often intersecting, calls for reform within American undergraduate education, particularly at the large, research university. First, a growing unease raised by the public sector concerned the overall quality of undergraduate education in America’s colleges and universities. Several critical books were published in the late 1980s on what the authors described as the decay of American undergraduate education—questionable or poorly integrated curricula, an overreliance on inexperienced instructors or graduate students to teach undergraduate courses, and a politically radical intellectual focus of contemporary academic scholarship, especially in the humanities and social sciences. These authors included Bloom’s (1987) *The Closing of the American Mind*, Ravitch and Finn’s (1988) *What Do Our Seventeen Year Olds Know*, and Sykes’s (1988) *ProfScam: Professors and the Demise of Higher Education*.

The full accuracy of the accusations made by these authors and books notwithstanding, observers in and outside of the academy found enough “truth” in these claims to focus more deeply on undergraduate education, particularly at large research universities. What followed were public calls for undergraduate reform—from federal and state lawmakers, parents, students, and higher education itself. Thus, from the 1980s to the present, state governments started mandating accountability of their public universities regarding access and retention, educational quality, declining standards, and costs. At the same time, parents, students, and legislators started demanding greater accountability about what are students learning, why attrition is so high, how higher education contributes to economic growth and individual returns on investment, and why it is so expensive (Gabelnick et al., 1990; Shapiro & Levine, 1999; Smith et al., 2004).

Federal policymakers also responded to the reform call, conducting their own studies and publishing their own reports. Publications such as The Boyer Commission’s (1998) *Reinventing Undergraduate Education: A Blueprint for America’s Research Universities*, The Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities’ (1990–2000), *Returning to Our Roots*, and The Association of American Colleges and Universities’ (2002) *Greater Expectations: A New Vision for Learning as a Nation Goes to College* similarly called for

American postsecondary institutions—especially large research universities—to rededicate their focus on undergraduate education by incorporating more active and collaborative learning activities, such as undergraduate research, first-year programming, freshman seminars, and capstone courses, especially if they help to create smaller, more intimate communities of practice within the larger university setting.

At the same time that public outcry was heightening about the quality of undergraduate education in America, so too were questions about who was gaining access to college and who was able to persist to graduation. It is well documented that postsecondary enrollment is more diverse by race/ethnicity, age, gender, socioeconomic status, etc., than ever before in American history and continues to grow more diverse with each successive year (Adelman, 1999; Learning Reconsidered, 2004). Moreover, students are reaching four-year postsecondary education from increasingly divergent routes, including via community colleges, transfers and “double dipping” from other four-year colleges, the military, and other nations (Adelman).

This increasingly diverse population of college-goers, it is argued, has an equally diverse set of learning styles that may or may not mirror the dominant mode of teaching and learning in the traditional college setting (Laufgraben, Shapiro, & Associates, 2004; Learning Reconsidered, 2004; Smith et al., 2004). Laufgraben et al. asserted that there was a transformational shift in pedagogy concerning college students in the 1990s, away from the traditional notion of faculty teaching being equated with student outcomes and toward a new paradigm placing an emphasis on student learning (Barr & Tagg, 1995). Several of the premises in the teaching to learning shift included the following:

- Students coming to college with prior knowledge and experience that affects how they process new information; teachers must pay attention to these differences in order to maximize impact.
- In order to reach students with different learning styles, passive forms of learning (such as lectures and reading) should be intermingled with more active techniques that reinforce meaning, such as team projects, integrative assignments, and mixed medias.
- Learning is best facilitated when instructors convey clear learning expectations in the form of learning outcomes (Laufgraben, et al., 2004, pp. 12–13).

It is important to note that while the drumbeat for educational reform toward student learning has been credited to have begun in the 1990s by authors such as Smith et al. (2004) and Laufgraben et al. (2004), Dewey and Meiklejohn argued for much of the same concepts in the early twentieth century: more active styles of learning, greater faculty involvement with students, smaller communities of practice, and co-curricular reinforcement and applications of curricular content.

Although living–learning programs are not considered the “answer” to all of the above challenges to undergraduate education, they have been advanced as an intervention that can address several of higher education’s educational shortfalls. First, LLPs help to “make the big store small” by providing a more intimate peer group

of students with similar interests within the broader university context (Inkelas & Weisman, 2003). The more narrow academic focus of the program may also serve as a way to motivate students by engaging them in a common enterprise, possibly generating an enthusiasm for learning (Gabelnick et al., 1990; Shapiro & Levine, 1999). In addition, LLPs are linked to easier transitions to college and retention through programming designed to engage students more deeply with faculty, peers, and active and collaborative styles of learning (e.g., research projects, service learning, and internships) (Inkelas & Associates, 2004; Schoem, 2004). Moreover, LLPs are thought to provide a bridge between students' in- and out-of-class experiences and thus impart greater coherence to the college environment for students who have difficulty navigating the sea of different experiences (Laufgraben, Shapiro, & Associates, 2004). In sum, living–learning programs are thought to “(make) possible the integration of the social, cultural, physical, spiritual, and intellectual growth of students in such a way that each complements the others” (Adams, 1974, p. 89).

However, while the propaganda on living–learning programs makes them appear like the ideal undergraduate educational intervention, ironically, the same calls for accountability that helped to ignite the explosion of LLPs across the country were not met with similar calls to assess whether LLPs could live up to their lofty reputations before and during their great proliferation. Unlike their learning community counterparts, LLPs did not have well-known gatekeepers such as those at Evergreen State who were knowledgeable of the historical and philosophical roots of these interventions, who could constrain the parameters of what could conceivably be described as an LLP, or could even be the facilitator of the dialogue regarding the evolution of these programs. This void would create a somewhat “Wild West” scenario—in which new LLPs were being created at rapid pace, but there was little-to-no agreed-upon definition of what an LLP should be, insight as to how they should be run, and evidence that they were effective in the goals and objectives they had been created to achieve.

## **Core Practices in Living–Learning Programs from the Extant Literature**

To fill the void in leadership on the dialogue regarding LLPs, a practitioner-based set of literature has emerged that describes what could be considered “best” or “core” practices of living–learning. The form of much of this literature is based on a “lessons learned” philosophy, in which practitioners or administrators who have developed LLPs share with public audiences tips that they have for creating new programs. Each offers practical advice, often in the form of lists or guidelines. Authors in this type of literature also typically identify actual LLPs that they feel are indicative of the core practices they are advancing, although none offer any methodological explanation for how they determined that those specific programs are the “best” practice of their assertions. Therefore, for this review, we have chosen to focus on the *practices* that the practitioner literature identifies as central to effective LLPs, but not the specific names of the programs themselves. In addition,

it is important to note that the broader learning community literature also offers core practices, but the sources cited below only encompass practices associated with *living-learning* programs. Because each different source offered distinct, idiosyncratic sets of core practices, instead of summarizing each work individually, we chose to synthesize their writings into seven principal practices for LLPs, detailed below.

### ***Establish a Clear Vision and Objectives***

The first practice involved establishing a clear vision and set of objectives for an LLP. Gruenewald and Brooke (2007) recommended that before any living-learning program is created, the developers establish a clear mission and set of related learning outcomes. Similarly, Hummel, Murphy, and Zeller (2008) suggested that new LLPs identify common goals, which may include initial learning outcomes that can be enhanced or supplemented over time. Some authors went even further by suggesting goals that they feel all LLPs should aspire to as core values. Schoem (2004) set lofty goals for LLPs, including (a) a meeting place for the scholarly community, (b) primary facilitators of deep learning on college campuses, and (c) a vehicle for democratic education and instructional innovation. Hummel et al. added to their basic premise of establishing common goals by prescribing philosophical constructs that they feel all LLPs should fulfill, including creating inclusive communities where students take active responsibility for their actions and providing opportunities for students to partake in a variety of learning experiences.

### ***Solicit Campus Leadership and Support***

Several authors noted the importance of campus leadership and support for the sustainment of LLPs. While Laufgraben, O'Connor, and Williams (2007) argued that successful LLPs need the support of campus senior leadership, Schoem (2004) utilized the word "champions" to represent key leadership that advocates for the centrality of living-learning on a campus. Both Laufgraben et al. and Schoem also asserted that leaders should recognize and reward outstanding efforts in living-learning, when appropriate. Part of that leadership includes financial support and sponsorship of expertise. Hummel et al. (2008) suggested three potential monetary and conceptual sponsors for LLPs: (a) academic affairs, who can offer guidance on enhancing pedagogy and curricula; (b) student affairs, who can assist in strengthening campus community and creating connections between in- and out-of-class experiences; and (c) external sponsors, who can offer financial support and take part in developmental efforts to secure future funding.

### ***Form Academic and Student Affairs Partnerships***

In addition to key leadership, several authors stressed the importance of partnerships between academic and student affairs units in order to operate effective LLPs. While

none provided specifics on how these two historically distinct cultures (Bergman & Brower, 2008; Schoem, 2004) can move past their differences and work together, several authors provided what they perceived as characteristics of strong partnerships. Gruenwalde and Brooke (2007) advised that effective administrative and organizational structures should provide equal roles in both supervision and funding for academic and student affairs partners. The authors also maintained that the foundation of effective partnerships is a transparent network of communication. Finally, Laufgraben et al. (2007) offered that keys to successful academic and student affairs partnerships include shared values and mutual support from campus champions.

### ***Seek and Maintain Faculty Involvement***

Roles of faculty in LLPs may vary, but several authors argued that their presence is critical. Faculty involvement may take the form of teaching courses for the LLP (Bergman & Brower, 2008), advising and mentoring students (Inkelas & Longerbeam, 2008; Inkelas, Soldner, & Szelenyi, 2008), participating in co-curricular activities like meals with students, lecture series, or field trips (Bergman & Brower), or serving on the LLP's steering committee or advisory council (Shapiro & Levine, 1999). A common challenge for LLPs is the recruitment and retention of faculty in such roles. Bergman and Brower noted that faculty often have stereotypes about residence hall settings and student affairs staff that may impede positive relationships at first (indeed, student affairs and residence life staff may hold negative stereotypes about faculty as well). The authors recommended a shared governance system where faculty and student affairs staff worked collaboratively to make decisions about the execution of the LLP. In addition, Bergman and Brower recommended to allow faculty to ease into the LLP experience by having them perform more traditional roles at first—such as teaching and advising—so that they may become more comfortable in their new environment before branching out to less familiar territory. Finally, while several authors (e.g., Laufgraben et al. 2004; Smith et al., 2004) lamented that the faculty reward structure at research institutions does not incentivize faculty to work with LLPs, other practitioners, such as Schoem (2004), took a different approach and recommended to recruit faculty who are either tenured or off of the tenure track who may be seeking the intellectual community that they never found within their traditional disciplines. Regardless of how they may become and stay involved with LLPs, student–faculty interaction has been shown in the empirical literature to be more prevalent for undergraduates who participate in LLPs (Garrett & Zabriskie, 2003; Inkelas, Vogt, Longerbeam, Owen, & Johnson, 2006b; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980; Pike, 1999).

### ***Facilitate Peer Interaction and a Healthy Residence Hall Climate***

Since LLPs are housed in residence halls, peer interaction and perceptions of the residence hall climate can be integral parts of a successful environment. Schoem (2004) conceived of LLPs as programs that can help build a strong sense of community for