Chapter 4G: Living-Learning Communities

Starting Points

Living-learning communities are an effective method for engaging students during their first year in higher education[1]. The more engaged a student is, the more likely they are to succeed[2]. At Colorado State University, a living-learning community of engineers has been in place for approximately thirty years. Studies from its inception[3] and with current students[4] have shown that shared living arrangements and associated learning support services lead to greater student satisfaction and a greater sense of connection to the College of Engineering. The results of this study are useful in the planning of broad-based living-learning communities for engineering students.

The following tables compare the satisfaction of first-year engineering students living both in Allison Hall and living in other accommodations. It is clear from these tables that there is a greater sense of belonging felt by Allison students to both the COE and fellow engineering students.

Table 4G.1 Connection to the College of Engineering

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Allison Resident	23.1	53.8	23.1	0	0
Other Residence	11.9	23.8	35.7	23.8	4.8
N of Cases			81		

Table 4G.2 Connection to Faculty in the College of Engineering

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Allison Resident	2.6	43.6	43.6	7.7	2.6
Other Residence	0	26.2	45.2	23.8	4.8
N of Cases			81		

[1] Winston, R.B. and S. Anchors, *Student housing and residential life*. 1993, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
[2] Astin, A., *Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education*. Journal of College Student Development, 1999. **40**: p. 518-529.
[3] McKelfresh, D.A., *The Impact of Living Environments on Engineering Students*, in *Education*. 1976, Colorado State University: Fort Collins, CO. p. xiv, 81.
[4] Thwing, A., *FRESHMAN ENGINEERING STUDENT SATISFACTION: COMPARISON OF AN ENGINEERING LIVING-LEARNING COMMUNITY AND STANDARD RESIDENCE HALLS*, in *School of Education*. 2004, Colorado State University: Fort Collins, CO.

Table 4G.3 Connection to Other Students in Engineering Major

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Allison Resident	41.0	46.2	12.8	0	0
Other Residence	11.9	42.9	31.0	11.9	2.4
N of Cases			81		

Table 4G.4 Academically Supported by the College of Engineering

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Allison Resident	20.5	48.7	25.6	5.1
Other Residence	7.1	31.0	45.2	16.7
N of Cases			81	

The success of this living-learning community has led to the design of a new residential facility that is scheduled to open for the Fall of 2007 semester which will house the engineering living-learning community. New programs and facility accommodations are being planned to build on current successes and to strengthen weaknesses discovered during this study.

Objectives and Goals

Objective: Provide a distinct living-learning environment for engineering students that will attract students to the College of Engineering and lead to greater retention of students in engineering.

The New Academic Village (NAV) building for engineering will house approximately 250 students starting in the fall of 2007 with the opportunity to expand in the future. Engineering students will have the most state-of-the-art residential facility on campus. This facility has been designed from the beginning with engineering students in mind. The College of Engineering is committed to moving most of the first-year experience into the new facility. The result is an excellent environment for combining residential life and academic programming into one facility. One of the most important predictors of student success is the level of engagement students felt with the college; the purpose of the NAV is to enhance those planned and unplanned opportunities for student engagement. A faculty in-residence will enhance opportunities for learning to extend beyond the classroom into the residential environments. This will increase both recruitment and retention of engineering students.

Goal: Provide living-learning programs for engineering students that will enhance students' academic success.

Strategies:

- Provide free tutoring in the engineering residence halls for engineering classes,
- Work with the College of Natural Sciences to provide free tutoring sessions for CNS courses in the engineering residence halls,
- Develop small engineering student study groups through the concept of course clustering,
- Arrange for greater interaction between students and faculty through joint events held in the engineering residence hall,
- Develop affinity-based living-learning student groups, e.g. women and minority based groups,
- Work with residence life in the hiring of engineering students to be the Resident Assistants for the engineering residence hall,
- Move the freshman engineering programs into the new residence hall in Fall 2007,
- Develop a peer mentoring program for the living-learning community,
- Develop state-of-the-art facilities incorporating instructional technology in the residential environments, and
- Include a faculty in-residence in the NAV.

Metrics:

- Retention among students in the new academic village, and
- Student satisfaction.