

# Taking Student Retention Seriously: Rethinking the First Year of University Study

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First Year Curriculum Design Symposium 2009

Queensland University of Technology

Brisbane, Australia

February 5, 2009

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# Promoting Student Success

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Focusing on the conditions within universities that promote student success during the critical first year of university study

# Conditions for Student Success

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- Expectations
  - Clear, consistent expectations
  - High expectations

# Conditions for Student Success

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- Expectations
- Support
  - Academic Support
  - Social Support

# Conditions for Student Success

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- Expectations
- Support
- Feedback
  - Entry assessment and placement
  - Monitoring and early warning
  - Classroom assessment of learning

# Conditions for Student Success

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- Expectations
- Support
- Feedback
- Engagement
  - Frequent contact with students, faculty, and staff
  - Active engagement in learning with others

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Students are more likely to persist, learn, and graduate when they are placed in educational settings that hold high expectations for their learning, provide support for and frequent feedback about their learning, and require them to actively share learning with others.

# Learning Communities

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Building engagement across the curriculum  
and between academic and professional staff

# Learning Communities

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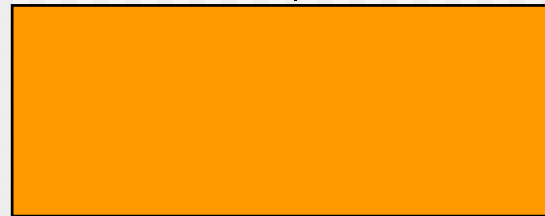
- Students enroll in classes together

- Linked Courses

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Sociology



First Year Writing

# Learning Communities

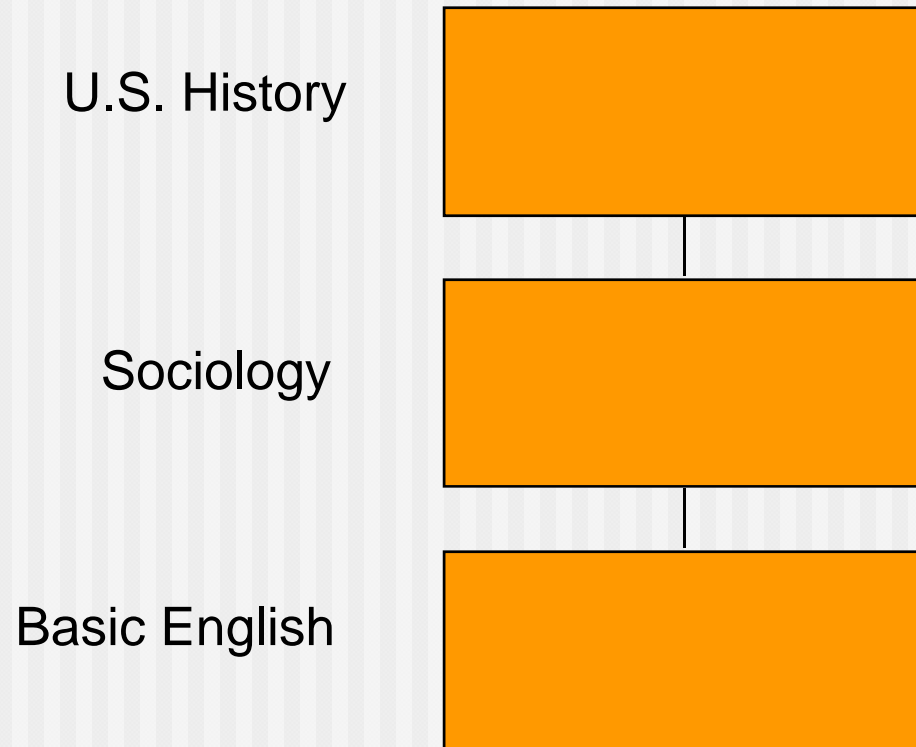
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- Students enroll in classes together
- Central theme or problem which organizes the curriculum

- Cluster Learning Communities

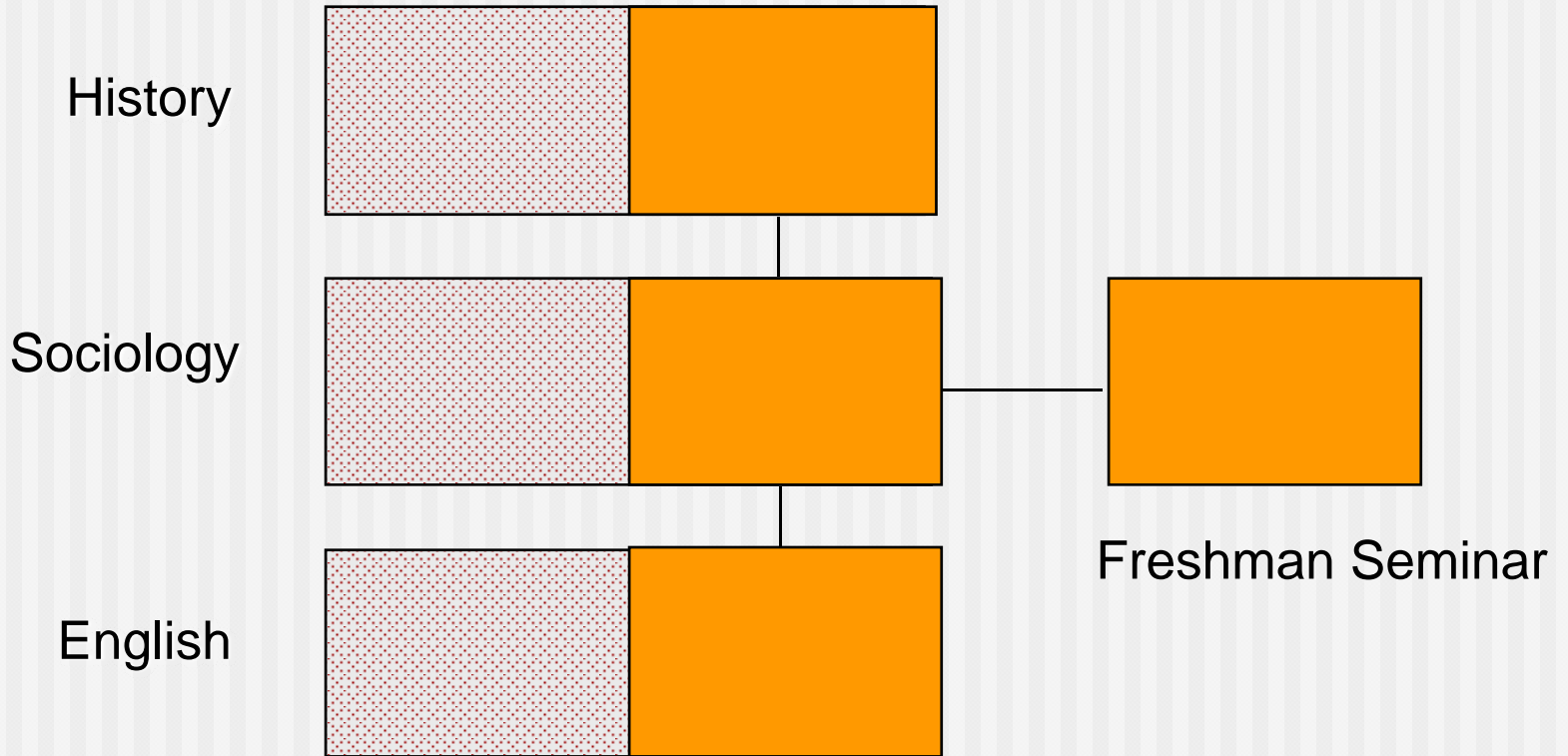
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*Whose Country is it Anyway?*



- Freshman Interest Groups

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# Learning Communities

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- Students enroll in classes together
- Central theme or problem which organizes the curriculum
- Use of cooperative or problem-based learning strategies

# Research Findings

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Understanding the impact of structured collaborative learning environments

# Research Findings

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- Developing supportive peer groups

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“In the cluster we knew each other, we were friends, we discussed everything from all the classes. We knew things very, very well because we discussed it all so much. We had discussions about everything. It was like a raft running the rapids of my life.”

# Research Findings

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- Developing supportive peer groups
- Studying together: Becoming engaged in learning

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“You know, the more I talk to other people about our class stuff, the homework, the tests, the more I’m actually learning and the more I learn not only about other people, but also about the subject because my brain is getting more, because I’m getting more involved with the other students in the class. I’m getting more involved with the class even after class.”

# Research Findings

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- Developing supportive peer groups
- Studying together: Becoming involved in learning
- Engagement, learning, and persistence

# Activity Score LC Comparison

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Course	3.05*	2.46
Library	2.15*	1.94
Faculty	2.25*	1.99
Students	3.12*	2.85
Writing	2.81*	2.65
Gain	2.68*	2.46

\* indicates significant difference between groups at .05 level.

# Outcomes

# LC

# Comparison

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Pass Rates . .

76.6

55.9

Continuation . .

57.3\*

41.2\*

\* estimated from several studies

# Research Findings

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- Developing supportive peer groups
- Studying together: Becoming involved in learning
- Engagement, learning, and persistence
- Learning better together

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“I think more people should be educated in this form of education. I mean because it is good. We learn not only how to interact with ourselves, but with other people of different races, different sizes, different colors, different everything. I mean it just makes it better ...not only do you learn more, you learn better.”

# Research Findings

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- Developing supportive peer groups
- Studying together: Becoming involved in learning
- Involvement, learning, and persistence
- Learning better together
- **Becoming a competent learner**

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"I think I have gotten smarter since I've been here. I can feel it."



# Closing Thoughts

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- Student success does not arise by chance
  - It requires an intentional, structured, and proactive set of strategies that are systematic and carefully aligned to the goal of student success



# Closing Thoughts

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- Student success does not arise by chance
- Rethinking the First Year of University
  - Moving beyond add-ons to the development of a coherent, systematic first-year experience

# Resources: Successful Programs

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L. Muraskin and J. Lee, *Raising the Graduation Rates of Low-Income College Students*. (Washington D.C., The Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, 2004)

# Resources: Supplemental Instruction

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Center for Supplemental Instruction  
University of Missouri-Kansas City

[www.umkc.edu/centers/cad/si](http://www.umkc.edu/centers/cad/si)

# Resources: Basic Skills

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Strengthening Pre-Collegiate Education in  
Community Colleges (SPECC)

Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching

[www.carnegiefoundation.org/programs/index.asp?key=26](http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/programs/index.asp?key=26)

# Resources: Basic Skills

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IBEST - Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training

Highline Community College

<http://flightline.highline.edu/ibest>

# Resources: Cooperative Learning

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Barbara Millis & Philip Cottell, 1998. *Cooperative Learning for Higher Education Faculty* (Phoenix: Oryx Press).

Barkley, E, K.P. Cross, and C. Howell-Major. 2004. *Collaborative Learning Techniques: A Handbook for College Faculty*. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass).

# Resources: Problem-Based Learning

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University of Delaware: Institute for Problem-Based Learning  
(<http://www.udel.edu/pbl>)

Maricopa Center for Learning & Instruction, Maricopa  
Community Colleges (<http://www.mcli.dist.maricopa.edu/pbl>)

# Resources: Service Learning

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Barbara Jacoby, 1997. *Service-Learning In Higher Education: Concepts And Practices*  
(San Francisco: Jossey-Bass)

# Resources: Learning Communities

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## The Learning Community Commons

The Washington Center for Undergraduate Education,  
The Evergreen State College

<http://learningcommons.evergreen.edu>

# Resources: Learning Communities

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## The Learning Community Listserv Evergreen State College

Gillies Malnarich and Emily Lardner  
Co-Directors, The Washington Center

[learncom@lists.evergreen.edu](mailto:learncom@lists.evergreen.edu)

# Resources: Classroom Assessment

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Thomas Angelo and Patricia Cross, 1993. *Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers* (2nd Edition, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass).

Huba, M. and J. Freed. 1999. *Learner-Centered Assessment on College Campuses: Shifting Focus from Teaching to Learning*. (New York: Allyn & Bacon).