

## **Boston University Living-Learning Communities Review November 4, 2013**

### **1. Executive Summary:**

The BU Living-Learning Community (LLC) Review Committee was convened in spring 2013, and charged to “undertake a comprehensive review of BU’s Specialty Houses, and make recommendations for the future development of BU’s living-learning programs over the next 5-10 years.”

To review and develop recommendations, we held seven working meetings from spring through autumn, 2013; toured Bay State Road Specialty Community Houses and interviewed staff and faculty advisors; examined how LLC programs could leverage BU’s Faculty-in-Residence program; surveyed BU Specialty Community students, comparing their results to a 2007 National LLC study; and investigated best practices by reviewing external documents and from leaders in the field, including an LLC administrator from Clemson University, a nationally recognized program.

Our review found that, on balance, Specialty Communities at BU have been successful, relative to the student body at large, indicated by the two core metrics the committee was specifically asked to evaluate: recruitment of higher achieving students (on average, 40 point higher SAT scores than students in traditional housing), and greater freshmen retention (93.5% vs. 91.0%). This 2.5% difference is substantial, considering that, if applied to BU as a whole, it would improve BU’s ranking from 66<sup>th</sup> to 45<sup>th</sup> in the most recent US News & World Report rankings for freshmen retention among national universities. Although we find evidence of relative success of the Specialty Communities, retention rates of Specialty Community residents remain below BU’s near-term goal as an institution (95.0%), indicating room for improvement.

To build on the encouraging quantitative results for BU’s Specialty Communities, and address key weaknesses we identified, we developed a vision statement for future BU LLC programs, and identified seven associated principles/process guidelines that BU should uniformly adopt to build an engaging, interesting and distinctive LLC program, reach closer to its retention goal, and increasingly attract quality students. Our recommended LLC vision is:

*“To support and encourage learning and discovery beyond the classroom and beyond what is offered by traditional departments, BU LLC’s promote experiential learning; interdisciplinary/interprofessional collaboration; enhanced connections among students on and off campus by leveraging digital technologies; increased opportunities for students to work with faculty from across disciplines; advising and mentoring; and access to facilities and spaces within LLC residences that foster community learning.”*

Our recommended Guiding Principles/Process Guidelines are:

- Living/Learning Communities are directly affiliated with at least one academic department, and are encouraged to promote interdisciplinary/interprofessional learning
- Living/Learning Communities are guided by explicit learning outcomes/goals

- Living/Learning Communities are led by faculty in partnership with BU's Residence Life
- Spaces in Living/Learning Communities are limited to students who elect to live there
- Living/Learning Communities will be expected to contribute to the quality of life in the larger communities of Boston University and the City of Boston
- The location and facilities associated with each Living/Learning Community will be determined in relation to the learning outcomes/goals
- Living/Learning Communities are assessed on an annual basis

We developed a hypothetical example of a "Screen Arts" LLC to illustrate application of these principles, emphasizing that this example is generalizable across thematic domains. Additionally, we provide an example of using digital technology, specifically Telepresence, to promote interdisciplinary/inter-professional innovations and engagement among BU LLC's, and their connections to Boston and beyond. Finally, we propose a set of specific steps that provide a pathway toward LLC development at BU.

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### 3. Background:

The BU LLC Review Committee was charged to review BU's Specialty Communities, and provide recommendations for a BU LLC program that will:

*"I. Provide an enriched educational experience that is engaging and interesting, that promotes student interaction with faculty on substantive matters, that actively advances the understanding of diverse experiences and points of view, that integrates what happens inside the classroom and out, and that matters significantly to students' intellectual development;*

*II. Increase BU's ability to recruit top students;*

*III. Increase BU's ability to retain and graduate those students;*

*IV. Promote curricular innovations (such as interdisciplinary programming across departments and colleges) or social/community goals (such as civic engagement or community service). "*

Elements one and four are largely qualitative in nature, while elements two and three allowed quantitative evaluation. The charge to the committee in its entirety is attached as Appendix I, and the roster of committee members is attached as Appendix II. Information on the current specialty housing opportunities available to BU students may be found in Appendix IV (List of Current BU Specialty Houses, which contains the requirements for living in a given residence) and Appendix X (Boston University Living-Learning Community Residences: Fact Sheets). We wish to note that, although there was student representation on the BU LLC Review Committee, this report cannot claim to capture the range of student perspectives which may be invaluable in designing effective LLC's, generally or individually. Our hope is that opportunities for student initiative in the LLC planning process will increase over time.

This report is structured to address the four goals above. First, we review the existing state of affairs with BU's Specialty Communities with respect to goals one through four. Thereafter, we propose a vision for the development of a LLC program at BU, which will help meet the goals expressed above, which is founded on seven guiding principles we propose for BU LLC's. Finally, we present a process roadmap, or set of steps, by which BU LLC programs may be developed.

### 4. Review of BU's Current Specialty Communities

#### *4.1 Review: "Provide an enriched educational experience..."*

Our review revealed that BU's Specialty Communities comprise a diverse collection of programs widely varying in quality of student experience and faculty involvement, with little collective unity or cohesion. We observed a program that is, at best, a collection of uneven and disparate parts. Examples of the wide variation in student experience and faculty engagement included the Music House, where, in 2012 (although not necessarily in other years), faculty and resident assistant (RA) engagement and student satisfaction were high, versus the Spanish House, where in 2012 faculty engagement was essentially non-existent, and students were left to 'fend for themselves'. More broadly indicative of the uneven faculty engagement is the result that, of the 30 Specialty Houses or floors for which faculty advisor

feedback was solicited by the Committee (on two occasions), responses from only two thirds of the programs were ultimately received (**Appendix III**). From these observations, we conclude that the Specialty Communities currently do not uniformly “*provide an enriched educational experience... that promotes student interaction with faculty on substantive matters*”. Moreover, without uniformly engaged (and incentivized) faculty, is it clear that BU Specialty Communities presently largely fail to “*integrate what happens inside the classroom and out*”.

A key factor contributing to lack of “*student interaction with faculty on substantive matters*” is simply that a large percentage of Specialty Community students do not choose to live in the Specialty Communities for their themes. This is largely due to housing ‘backfilling’. Backfill rates, or the number of undergraduates being placed into a Specialty Community to fill open bed spaces, as opposed to opting in, poses a significant issue in the current structure of BU’s Specialty Communities. In a 2012 comparison of LLC formats, Frazier and Eighmy (2012) noted that overall student satisfaction was lower within an LLC including both students who chose the LLC and those who were placed, as compared to LLCs where all students had opted in. Tension was noted in this LLC, where students who had not chosen to live in the LLC felt they did not need to comply with LLC policies and attend LLC events, while those who chose the program did not feel they were receiving the promised experience. Similar tensions exist in BU’s programs (see student comments in Appendix V), where over 40% of the freshmen in an LLC between Fall 2009 and Fall 2011 had not chosen to live there.

It is important to note that, in spite of these criticisms of BU Specialty Communities, the fact that some BU Specialty Community programs lack explicit learning goals and curriculum is not necessarily undesirable, because some students may benefit more from residences based on loosely defined themes without explicit learning goals; we consider such programs to be outside the scope of a consideration of Living-Learning Communities.

There is little evidence that the current Specialty Community arrangement is uniformly effective in addressing the key aspects of “*actively advanc[ing] the understanding of diverse experiences and points of view*”. Exceptions include Specialty Communities that include diversity as an explicit part of the house theme (e.g. Common Ground House and Floor), and some promising cross-cutting activities like multi-language house dinners ([www.bu.edu/housing/residences/specialty/specialty-housing-on-bay-state-road-from-bu-today/](http://www.bu.edu/housing/residences/specialty/specialty-housing-on-bay-state-road-from-bu-today/)).

Nevertheless, as a result of the mostly amalgamative nature of Specialty Communities at BU, living in Specialty

**Box 1: Calls for Transformative Change**

“We need to redesign – not simply improve – the program...” – LLC Committee Member

“Tear it down and start from scratch... there is nothing from the current system that should be kept.” – LLC Committee Member

“...at basis the Specialty Community is really just another dorm, with a couple of events added on, and not taken seriously as a Living-Learning Community.” – Specialty House Faculty Advisor

“It's clear that the existing specialty houses do not have a strong academic component. If they are to be transitioned into true learning communities they would need to be redefined around the same principles that guide curriculum and program development across the University. This effort would need to be led by faculty.” – LLC Committee Member

Communities tends to place students on the periphery of university life rather than in its center, and within relatively narrowly focused intellectual communities. This may hinder students experiencing diverse experiences and points of view. In rare examples of cross-cutting activities and programs across specialty homes (e.g., international dinners as noted above), organizers commented that the events were challenging to organize due to competing priorities and lack of incentives for faculty and student participation.

While not part of our charge, we found it instructive to examine how the Faculty-in-Residence program (a program that is distinct from BU Specialty Communities) can work to draw students together from diverse backgrounds and academic units, and to consider how BU LLC's might leverage these kinds of inviting campus programs to benefit. Three committee members attended a highly successful evening campus event (Sargent Choice Test Kitchen) bringing together a diverse group of students, faculty, alumni, and even guests from off-campus, hosted by Prof. Jacobs, Faculty-in-Residence at Student Village II, during open hours on the evening of Sept. 11, 2013 (<http://blogs.bu.edu/sargentchoice/2013/09/17/test-kitchen-peach-cobbler/>). Students prepared and cooked a dessert together, and were treated to a short guest appearance by a local food entrepreneur. Three LLC Review Committee members attended with a large group of undergraduate and graduate students (>50), in diverse disciplines spanning engineering to occupational therapy, nutritional science, and neuroscience. Students were clearly highly engaged in the collective aspects of the event (cooking, listening), and in casual conversations among friends and new acquaintances. Key to the success of this program (even though it is not tied to a Specialty Community) was a highly engaged faculty member with the physical resource (apartment) and the explicit endorsement of a BU educational program (<http://buquad.com/2013/04/12/sargent-choice-test-kitchen-provides-life-skills-healthy-dessert/>). Much can be learned about developing a successful sense of community in LLC's at BU from this existing BU program; a follow up comment from the Review Committee was to 'bottle the formula' to serve as a recipe for a successful LLC activity.

The mixed nature of student satisfaction with Specialty Communities is exemplified in student comments in Appendix V. Box 1 presents comments by the LLC Review Committee and Specialty House Advisors pointing out the large gap between Specialty Communities and LLC's.

#### 4.2 Review: "Increase BU's ability to recruit top students"

In order to assess the current performance of BU Specialty Communities at recruiting high achieving students, we compiled BU data consistent with data collected as part of the 2007 National Study of Living-Learning Programs (Appendix VI). Review of BU student data was led by Linette Decarie, Director of Institutional Research. We found that Specialty Community students at BU entered with a higher combined SAT score, and had greater high school GPA's. In fall 2012, the median 3-Score SAT and GPA of BU students residing in BU Specialty Communities was 1950 and 3.70, compared to 1910 and 3.60 for students in traditional BU housing. This difference was even greater when considering only students applying to live in a BU Specialty Community, resulting in scores of 1965 and 3.70, respectively. Even with the effects of the Trustee Scholar House and Kilachand Honors College students removed, the medians of students in BU Specialty Communities remain strong at 1930 and 3.65, respectively. These

data indicate that the Specialty House Programs at BU have significant positive impact on attracting higher academically achieving students than the BU student population at large.

These data incorporate a sample of 10,934 students, including 9,595 in traditional housing, and 1,339 in specialty housing (Appendix VII). Comparison of students indicates that students in BU Specialty Communities had statistically significantly higher high school GPA ( $3.64 \pm 0.28$ ) and combined SAT ( $1957 \pm 168$ ) than students in traditional housing,  $t(10460) = -10.4, p < .001$  and ,  $t(9304) = -8.3, p < .001$ , respectively. Students in BU Specialty Communities, excluding those in Kilachand Honors College and the Trustee Scholars House, also had statistically significantly higher high school GPA ( $3.62 \pm 0.28$ ) and combined SAT ( $1938 \pm 157$ ) than students in traditional housing,  $t(10318) = -7.7, p < .001$  and ,  $t(9180) = -4.3, p < .001$ , respectively.

Combined SAT scores for LLC and non-LLC students at comparable universities were not reported in the 2007 National Study; therefore it is not possible to make a comparison of BU's performance against comparable universities in LLC recruitment of top students. Nevertheless, the BU SAT scores are well below the highest possible scores, so there is effectively no constraint on future improvement in scores; that is, there is ample 'ceiling' room for improvement in this metric.

#### 4.3 Review: "Increase BU's ability to retain and graduate those students"

Specialty Communities at BU provide an introductory experience to the University, with freshmen typically comprising the majority of residents (e.g., 66% of all Specialty Community residents in fall 2012, were freshmen). We reviewed three years of BU retention rate data by Specialty Community for the cohorts entering between fall 2009 and 2011 (Appendix VIII). Despite issues with backfill rates, retention among freshmen in Specialty Communities was strong. For the cohorts entering between fall 2009 and fall 2011, freshman-to-sophomore retention for the over 3,100 Specialty Community residents was 93.5%, compared to 91.0% for the over 9,400 students in general housing. The difference in these proportions is significant,  $\chi^2(1, N=12,546)=19.05, p<0.001$ .

The overall higher quality of students in the Specialty Communities, as described in the previous subsection (4.2), may contribute to this stronger performance. While it is unclear if the source of increased retention is due to the ability of the Specialty Community programs to attract students with stronger academic preparation, or if they are providing a better 1st year experience (or a combination of the two), the benefit is still felt at BU in that we retain more of these engaged students.

#### 4.4 Review: "Promote curricular innovations or social/community goals"

Our review found that, on an individual basis, some Specialty Communities promoted curricular innovations and/or social/community goals. For example, the Community Service House has an explicit mission of engaging in local community service projects and the First Year Student Outreach Project (FYSOP), and enjoys strong support from the BU Community Service Center. Common among Specialty Houses were extra-curricular activities. In several other Specialty Communities, the link to curriculum is limited to providing common spaces for studying together. We are unaware of examples of direct integration of curricula into BU Specialty Communities.

In the Review Committee’s first meeting, Provost Loizeaux noted the increasing trend of educational technology in curriculum, and challenged the Committee to consider ways in which LLC’s could leverage, rather than compete with, educational technologies. Educational and information technology represent a resource with transformative potential for enhancing the residential experience in Specialty Communities, but our review found that this technology is currently not utilized in BU Specialty Communities.

The housing asset (particularly along Bay State Road), and its setting within historic Boston, is extraordinary and was highlighted in the Review Committee charge as an element of particular importance to consider. We consider this housing asset as part of this section on social/community goals because of the potential this historic housing stock has to link BU to a broader social and community fabric in the City of Boston. [On a related point, the number, scale, and character of Bay State Road and Buswell Street residences inform a sub-question posed to the BU LLC Review Committee - to consider an appropriate size and scale of a future BU LLC program. We recommend that the unique and historic character of this housing asset supports a future BU LLC program that leverages these unique facilities, and therefore operates at a base scale (if not collective size) similar to that of the current Specialty Communities.]

Our review of Specialty Community marketing materials (e.g. on the internet) shows that this asset is underutilized as a tool to attract potential students. An important counterpoint to this, however, is advice from Kathy Bush Hobgood, of Clemson University (the programs of which were singled out as ‘the best of the best’ by Dr. Karen Inkelas, lead author of the 2007 National LL Program Study), who cautions that “you should never place LLC’s in the most desirable and least desirable housing facilities”. The charm of Bay State Road and its houses appear to be overshadowed by the modern Student Village residences, so it may be that this asset is well positioned according to Ms. Hobgood’s perspective.

## **5. Developing Living-Learning Communities at BU: A Vision, Guiding Principles, and Way Forward**

Our review of BU Specialty Communities has shown them to be successful in attracting higher achieving students, and retaining them at a substantially greater percentage than BU students at large. However, there is both ample room for improvement in these metrics, and some clear shortcomings in Specialty Communities that make them fall short of being genuine Living-Learning Communities. These shortcomings include a lack of uniformly engaged faculty and students; lack of explicit curricular activities and learning goals; and a large percentage of students who live in Specialty Communities for reasons other than a desire to be part of a learning community associated with the Specialty Community theme. Moreover, we have found that BU’s Specialty Communities currently have few cross-cutting activities and events which could serve to enhance exposure to diverse intellectual, professional, cultural or social perspectives; do not as a whole effectively leverage the unique housing asset itself, and Boston as a great urban center, in which experiential learning can occur; and make little use of digital technology in enhancing connections among students and communities on campus and off.

### **5.1 Vision Statement**

The identification of the above shortcomings in our review has motivated us to develop a vision that explicitly seeks to address them, and in doing so, to better fulfill BU's objective for a LLC program that *"provides an enriched educational experience that is engaging and interesting, that promotes student interaction with faculty on substantive matters, that actively advances the understanding of diverse experiences and points of view, that integrates what happens inside the classroom and out, and that matters significantly to students' intellectual development; promotes curricular innovations (such as interdisciplinary programming across departments and colleges) or social/community goals (such as civic engagement or community service)."* Additionally, although linking these qualitative objectives to the quantitative goals of *"increasing BU's ability to recruit top students"* and *"increase BU's ability to retain and graduate those students"* cannot be reduced to a simple numerical formula, we sought to develop a vision, guidelines, and process for a BU LLC program that would tend to promote attraction and retention of quality students.

In light of the above considerations, we propose this vision/mission statement for a BU LLC program:

*"To support and encourage learning and discovery beyond the classroom and beyond what is offered by traditional departments, BU LLC's promote experiential learning; interdisciplinary/interprofessional collaboration; enhanced connections among students on and off campus by leveraging digital technologies; increased opportunities for students to work with faculty from across disciplines; advising and mentoring; and access to facilities and spaces within LLC residences that foster community learning."*

In the above vision statement, we see "experiential learning" to be more than writing a paper, but building a model, testing a hypothesis, producing a film, etc.; that interdisciplinary collaboration would involve creating opportunities for, say, SHA, SMG, Earth Science, and Engineering students to work together on a sustainability project; and that "access to facilities and spaces" would mean access to resources such as a screening room, a professional kitchen, or an "innovation-lab" modeled on Harvard's i-lab, that can meaningfully support curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular learning.

In the above vision, individual LLC's, defined by physical residences, should be considered part of a family of LLC's that defines a larger collective BU LLC in which students feel membership, a sense of belonging, and connectivity across campus, Boston, and the Globe. Becoming more than the sum of its parts, the BU LLC family can serve as a complementary but more diverse theme-oriented alternative to the Kilachand Honors College, while adopting its key precepts. Central to the success of this effort will be full immersion of faculty in designing, coordinating, and participating in the BU LLC.

## **5.2 Guiding Principles**

To facilitate "unpacking" this vision statement and make it practicable, we developed seven guiding principles (or process guidelines) for a BU LLC program, as follows:

**Principle 1:** Living/Learning Communities are directly affiliated with at least one academic department (or administrative unit, if appropriate), and are encouraged to promote interdisciplinary/inter-professional learning

**Principle 2:** Living/Learning Communities are guided by explicit learning outcomes/goals

**Principle 3:** Living/Learning Communities are led by faculty in partnership with BU's Residence Life

**Principle 4:** Spaces in Living/Learning Communities are limited to students who elect to live there

**Principle 5:** Living/Learning Communities will be expected to contribute to the quality of life in the larger communities of Boston University and the City of Boston

**Principle 6:** The location and facilities associated with each Living/Learning Community will be determined in relation to the learning outcomes/goals

**Principle 7:** Living/Learning Communities are assessed on an annual basis

If BU adopts a vision statement and principles similar to those proposed above, there are a number of associated practical considerations we have considered. We offer the following specific recommendations:

- Faculty participation in LLC's should be at a categorically much greater level than at present in Specialty Communities. In addition to serving as individual LLC advisors (and, when to advantage, engaged Faculty-in-Residence), faculty roles should include academic coordination and cross-cutting programming/curriculum development. Moreover, fully engaged faculty (and student) participation in LLC's should be promoted by teaching (and course) credits for involvement in LLC curricular and extra-curricular activities. Programs and procedures should be developed that acknowledge, enable, facilitate, and reward faculty and their families and "significant others" that spend time after hours or on weekends with LLC's, to allow faculty to share in the life of a LLC without jeopardizing family life, providing extraordinary faculty access to LLC students, and allowing students to know faculty as people, as life mentors as much as teachers. For example, faculty could be provided with a small budget for inviting LLC students to their homes—on or off campus—for dinner.

- LLC curricula should be developed that differentiates them from conventional classroom teaching, by emphasizing the role of place, location, and face-to-face interaction. Curricula could include a mix of activities and assignments in residences, BU labs, facilities and classrooms, and in physical and virtual excursions to off-campus locations, and to events, talks, and performances. Well defined learning outcomes and assessment should be developed that ensure that LLC curricula, though unabashedly unconventional, meet learning goals.

- To foster cross-LLC interaction and a sense of a larger LLC at the center of university life, a program of cross-cutting, interdisciplinary and interprofessional activities and events could be developed and supported. For example, a BU LLC film festival (e.g., projected outside on an autumn evening on Bay State Road) could highlight the diversity of LLCs while focusing on unifying themes (e.g., a film series about food could solicit the Italian-themed film "Big Night" from the Italian House and "Food, Inc." from the Earth House); and involve students from the Sargent House to discuss nutrition.

- Branding of the housing asset, particularly along Bay State Road, should be managed carefully. As appropriate, and so that it avoids applicants that are interested primarily in the desirability of the housing, LLC facilities may be showcased and highlighted in marketing and branding as having the character of Beacon Hill or the Back Bay, much of which is, after all, of the same housing stock. To achieve truth in advertising, facilities within residences should be upgraded to include inviting common spaces and state-of-the-art learning and performing facilities, while maintaining the charm and architectural character of these historic residences. Bay State Road and Buswell Street should be periodically opened up for street fairs and block parties where LLC communities can mingle, socialize, and identify as part of a larger community.

- LLCs that occupy floors should be associated with detached LLC houses of similar theme, so that freshmen may transition as upperclassmen from broader to more focused communities in houses with more desirable amenities that facilitate specialty learning. This would not preclude freshmen from applying to live in the smaller houses should they prefer a smaller community in their freshman year.

- Information technology (IT) should be used to enhance the residential experience in LLC's, rather than to undermine the value of place-based LLC's. At its best, IT can facilitate the experience of and appreciation for geography, connect people and cultures across the globe (through telepresence) and allow residents to interact with their built environment in powerfully enlightening ways. At worst, IT creates an "anywhere but here" culture that devalues the experience of living in a LLC. Exploiting the benefits and avoiding pitfalls of IT in LLC's will be a central challenge.

### 5.3 Example BU Screen Arts LLC and Telepresence Digital Technology Initiative

To illustrate the implementation of a BU LLC that is guided by the previously described vision and principles, we developed a hypothetical “Screen Arts LLC” (Box 2). Our intention here is not to specifically propose this LLC, but rather to present it as a generalizable model which could find expression among a wide range of intellectual domains, including interdisciplinary and interprofessional.

#### **Box 2: A Living-Learning Community Model (Screen Arts Example)**

Films and television shows are a popular source of entertainment as well as rich fields of academic study. Today, top media scholars are as likely to analyze an episode of *Homeland* as they are a Martin Scorsese film. Hugely popular cable television series like *Breaking Bad* and *Sons of Anarchy* have forced broadcast networks to raise their budgets and their creativity in order to keep up with cable outlets like HBO and Showtime, which routinely spend millions of dollars on a single episode. Today, the world’s best directors, writers and actors are equally comfortable creating a television show as a feature film. The line between feature films and television has blurred so much that we can now call them “Screen Arts.”

We envision a living-learning community entitled the Screen Arts LLC. Given that college-age students are avid viewers of film and television, we believe it would be an attractive offering for entering freshmen. It would be interdisciplinary in that both CAS and COM offer many courses in cinema and media studies, as well as a joint minor.

We propose that a floor on Warren Towers become a Screen Arts LLC, for students who love film and television and want to study them as textual material, not just entertainment.

Freshmen who chose to join the Screen Arts floor would take a film and television studies course for academic credit, taught by a full-time faculty member, and they would attend regularly scheduled events focusing on different aspects of the Screen Arts. For instance, COM’s Department of Film and Television offers at least five Cinematheques every semester where prominent writers, directors, editors, and television producers from all over the world come to speak about their recent projects. Students in this LLC would attend these Cinematheques as part of this academic course. In February, COM has its own short film festival, called the Redstone Film Festival. LLC students could serve as preliminary judges, vetting entries for the final judges.

The Boston area has several vibrant independent cinemas that offer films not found at the multiplexes--theaters such as Coolidge Corner in Brookline, the Brattle in Cambridge and the MFA. Outings would be arranged to take students to special screenings.

Ideally a faculty member would live in Warren Towers and be available for informal gatherings, meals and screenings. At this writing, noted film studies professor Roy Grundmann lives in Warren Towers, as part of Residence Life’s Faculty-in-Residence program.

**Box 2: A Living-Learning Community Model (Screen Arts) (continued)**

After freshman year, students would then choose to live in the Screen Arts House on Bay State Road. The house would have its own basement screening room equipped with screen, projector, Blu-ray player and connection to the Internet, as well as broadcast and cable networks. There would also be a production and writing component for those who want to try their hand at creating a work of screen art. To support these endeavors, the screening room will be equipped with a computer containing editing and visual effects software. There will also be several portable digital cameras and support equipment available for use by LLC house residents.

It is important that the Screen Arts House LLC has facilities that will entice a student to live in this house rather than move to a Student Village or an Allston apartment. In the Screen Arts House it is the screening room that will make possible a host of activities—lectures, screenings, workshops, research presentations and guest-speakers. The computer and digital camera equipment would enable students in the LLC to work together on creative projects and other research activities.

Another benefit of the Screen Arts House is the mixture of classes. Freshmen who visit the house for events would meet the sophomores, juniors and seniors who live there. This would create an environment where freshmen and sophomores could learn from the upperclassmen, while the upperclassmen could serve as guides and mentors for the younger students.

Because great directors come from all over the globe, connections with BU's language departments can easily be formed. Award-winning international films could be offered on a weekly basis.

There are hundreds of science-fiction films and television shows that could entice faculty and students from the science and engineering departments to participate in screening series.

Close connection between the freshman floor and the Screen Arts House is critical to the success of the LLC. Someone will need to facilitate the screenings, lectures and events and to collaborate with various departments all over campus whose students will be part of this LLC. That person will also be charged with organizing the field trips. We propose that a full-time faculty member, adjunct faculty member, senior graduate student or school administrator fill the position. She or he will be paid for the work. A resident assistant (RA) would not be permitted to fulfill these duties.

Faculty participating in these classes, seminars and events would be given appropriate course credit and have their time and efforts come under the "Teaching" category for consideration for merit pay and promotion and tenure.

## **Box 2: A Living-Learning Community Model (Screen Arts) (continued)**

In summary, because this Living-Learning Community would require no prior expertise and would have an *interdisciplinary/interprofessional approach* at its core, the participating students would find it academically enriching and socially inclusive. In addition, we believe faculty from all over campus will find it attractive as well. The connection between the LLC floor and the LLC house will provide an easy transition from high rise to brownstone, and the specially equipped screening room in the house will prove a magnet for *faculty and student activities and interaction*. The LLC also encourages students to *explore the greater Boston area* as they discover independent theaters and screening options.

**Learning Goals:** Students in the Screen Arts LLC will develop visual literacy skills that will complement the reading, writing and computation skills they acquire while at Boston University. These visual literacy skills will equip them to think critically about all types of media: old, new and emerging. In addition they will be exposed to some of the seminal films and television programs produced in the U.S. and across the world. They will examine film and television from a variety of perspectives, including historical, cultural and aesthetic. Faculty will train students to look beyond plot, dialog and character development—where most of the entertainment value is derived—to ponder meaning, style, context, emotional impact, and symbolism. Students will learn how to analyze a film and a television program using multiple analytical and theoretical frameworks—cultural, formal, ideological, semiotic, etc. They will also study how films and television programs are made, examining pre-production, production and post-production phases. They will then analyze how the choices that were made during each phase affected the success of the finished product. In addition, they will learn moving picture editing skills and how to write a script for a short film or an episode for a television show.

**Measurable Learning Outcomes:** Students who have spent a year or more as part of the Screen Arts LLC will be able to:

- Choose a film or television program and give an oral presentation analyzing it in terms of various analytical and theoretical frameworks.
- Write a scholarly paper that compares and contrasts a number of films or television programs in terms of their style, genre, artistic choices, and thematic content.
- List the most frequently produced genres and the defining characteristics of each genre.
- Explain how film and television enact different modes of storytelling that adhere to distinct industrial circumstances.
- Produce an original work using moving picture editing software.
- Write a script for a short film or an episode for a television show.
- Take a friend, using public transportation, to one of the Boston areas leading independent film venues

The above example embodies the interdisciplinary/interprofessional, experiential, place-based (Boston), and faculty-and-student-engaged experience we aspire for all future BU LLC programs to exhibit.

Additionally, to leverage the emergence of digital/educational technology in universities, in a way that can powerfully connect students across campus, Boston, and beyond, we propose digital ‘connective tissue’, one form of which can be Telepresence. The rationale and an example of an implementation is given in Box 3.

### **Box 3: Telepresence as Digital Connective Tissue for BU LLC’s**

**Motivation and Rationale:** Digital tools enable communication across geographical distance but may promote an ‘anywhere but here’ culture where attention to mobile device communication trumps face to face communication. The challenge for university LLC’s, as emphasized by Provost Loizeaux in our first meeting, is to utilize the potential of information and educational technology to enable enriching learning experiences while avoiding digital dependency or social isolation.

In considering ways that digital technologies might be leveraged to enhance connection and collaboration among students living in LLCs both on and off campus, the Committee explored “telepresence,” a technically sophisticated version of teleconferencing that offers participants significantly better image and sound quality (as well as connection to mobile phones) than traditional videoconferencing. (Examples of university interest in and use of telepresence appear in Appendix IX.) One idea for using telepresence to connect students in diverse places was pitched to the Committee by Monica Gribauski, a Computer Science major and member of the Builds Club. Gribauski envisioned installing screens (virtual “windows” or “portals”) in different LLCs on campus, thus offering students the opportunity, though not the obligation, to connect and collaborate.

One model for connecting students in different places via telepresence was proposed in relation to the College of General Studies Study Abroad Program. Each year, a group of CGS students spend the fall of their sophomore year in London. In order to connect Boston-based CGS students and faculty to the life and experiences of those living abroad, a video portal could be installed, connecting one of the existing screens in the CGS lobby or in the CGS Gilbane House with a screen in one of the common spaces in the South Kensington dormitory where CGS London students live. In discussions with Interim CGS Dean Natalie McKnight, a “StoryCorps” project was proposed, in which one or a group of students living abroad might share a “CGS London” experience at an appointed time each day. In addition, a collaborative reading project could be planned, in which CGS students in Boston and London

**Box 3: Telepresence as Digital Connective Tissue for BU LLC's (continued)**

might participate in a 24-hour marathon reading of a text assigned to both the Boston and London CGS sophomores (for example, *All Quiet on the Western Front*). Finally, for those CGS "January Freshmen" whose first year begins in January and culminates in six weeks of intensive summer study in London, the portal might offer an early window into that London world.

The Committee recommends encouraging concrete learning outcome initiatives that would involve faculty and students in collaborative co-curricular projects that will provide an education in and the creative utilization of mobile phones, fixed conferencing installations, and passive portals. As a first step, we propose that Educational Media explore the viability of the installation of screens and mobile apps on the CGS Floor and Gilbane House, with potential to explore connection to the International program office in London.

## 5.4 The Way Forward

We propose the following series of actions in order to realize the development of a BU LLC Program.

### *Phase I*

- 5.4.1 Provost designates a faculty person to be charged with supervising the LLC program, to be called the LLC Administrator, reporting to the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Affairs. The LLC Administrator would be released from teaching duties. The Provost also designates two full time representatives of Residence Life to (a) administer the LLC program and (b) plan and implement the programs that faculty partners wish to present to students in LLCs, respectively. The planning and implementation role includes, for example, working with Facilities Management on room set up and break down; working with catering for events involving food; working with media and IS&T on technical needs, etc.
- 5.4.2 At a meeting called by the President/Provost with the Deans and Associate Deans of the Charles River Campus' schools and colleges, the LLC Administrator explains/discusses the goals of the LLCs, the guiding principles, the model, and how LLC's differ from existing specialty communities. After the explanation, there will be time for questions and answers from the Deans in attendance. The Provost will explain her desire for the deans to get behind this effort and to cooperate fully with the LLC administrator. Deans are asked to put together a list of faculty members who might be good candidates for designing an LLC and to send that list to the LLC Administrator.
- 5.4.3 The LLC Administrator attends the monthly faculty meeting of each of the Charles River Campus schools and colleges and explains/discusses the goals of the LLCs, the guiding principles, the model, and how they differ from specialty houses. After the explanation, there will be time for questions and answers from the faculty in attendance.
- 5.4.4 At the same time these visits to faculty meetings are taking place, the LLC Administrator calls upon the faculty whom the Deans have suggested, in order to get ideas percolating.
- 5.4.5 The LLC Administrator works with Associate Deans and interested faculty to review and refine plans.

- 5.4.6 Participating Faculty and LLC Administrator meet with Residence Life liaison to plan dorm space.
- 5.4.7 LLC Administrator meets with Admissions to plan/organize an opt-out LLC dorm plan for accepted students' housing website.

## Phase II

- 5.4.8 Sophomore, Junior and Senior housing on Bay State Road and other housing options are designed/remodeled to accommodate the needs of the LLC Houses that grow from the 1st year dorm LLCs.
- 5.4.9 LLC Administrator works to organize joint programming between the dorms and LLC houses, as well as programs between the various LLCs.
- 5.4.10 LLC Administrator conducts surveys and reviews data about the success of the LLCs and subsequently works to strengthen those needing assistance. Works with faculty to nurture new LLCs.