

Review of Living-Learning Programs

Review Committee Membership

Chair: Nathan Phillips, Professor, CAS, Earth & Environment

Staff: Kelly Connors, Office of the Provost

Heather Barrett, Graduate (PhD) Student, English, CAS

Linette Decarie, Director, Institutional Research

Roscoe Giles, Professor, ENG, Electrical Engineering (Fall 2013)

Karen Jacobs, Clinical Professor, SAR, Occupational Therapy; Faculty-in-Residence,
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Steven Jarvi, Associate Dean, Student Academic Life, CAS

Sam Kauffmann, Professor, COM, Film

Hugh O'Donnell, Professor, CFA, Visual Arts

Davida Pines, Associate Professor, CGS, Rhetoric

Tyrone Porter, Associate Professor, ENG, Mechanical Engineering (Spring 2013)

Sean Reilly, Undergraduate Student, CAS; RA Italian House

Bruce Schulman, Professor, CAS, History

Kelly Walter, Associate Vice President and Executive Director, Admissions

David Zamojski, Assistant Dean of Students and Director, Residence Life

Background: Living-Learning Communities

Together with WISE@Warren, the new WISE-Up, and the Kilachand Honors College, 30 Specialty Houses/Floors make up Boston University's living-learning communities.

The hope of the living-learning community movement at large research universities has been that students living in smaller, more manageable communities with a focus on a common interest and sometimes with associated curricular and co-curricular programs, adapt more readily to college both academically and socially, learn better and more, graduate in greater numbers and in a more timely way. The kinds of living-learning communities offered by universities have also helped articulate their distinctive intellectual strengths and values—the particular identities that set one university apart from another--and have, thus, aided in the recruitment of high-achieving students who are a good “fit.” The growth of living-learning programs and their popularity with students suggest that they work, at least in some ways. The 2007 [National Survey of Living Learning Programs](#), based on student-reported evidence, concluded that students in living-learning programs have a somewhat easier transition to college, higher grades, a stronger sense of belonging, greater likelihood of attending graduate school, and greater gains in crucial skills such as critical thinking, among other positive advantages. Other studies report more dramatic positive effects, including: students in living-learning communities are

35% less likely to leave the university and 49% less likely to be dismissed, are 2.5 times more likely to meet with each other outside of class and are 7.4 times more likely to meet informally with faculty. That report also suggests that the kind of program and its explicit goals matter to the program's effectiveness. On the other hand, the 2007 study reported that students in living-learning programs have less appreciation for diversity and fewer interactions with people who are different from them or who don't share their views. It also found a number of areas in which living-learning communities had little effect.

Charge to the Committee

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. The recommendations could include suggestions for particular themes for living-learning programs, but should focus centrally on the kind of program and a process for developing them. The Committee should report its recommendations to the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Affairs by May 17, 2013.

The Committee should pay particular attention to evaluating whether BU is taking full advantage of living-learning communities to:

1. 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;
2. Increase BU's ability to recruit top students;
3. Increase BU's ability to retain and graduate those students;
4. Promote curricular innovations (such as interdisciplinary programming across departments and colleges) or social/community goals (such as civic engagement or community service).

The proposed plan should pay special attention to how living-learning programs help define a distinctive BU residential experience. This will include thinking carefully about how to use our extraordinary housing assets, particularly the houses on Bay State Road, to best advantage. Size of program will be an important factor here.

In conducting its study, the committee should think of BU's living-learning communities as a whole. It is assumed that all programs should advance goal 1 above, but not all programs need to promote all of goals 2-4. Our suite of offerings as a whole should, however, should strongly advance all four.

The committee will want to consider such questions as: how effective are the existing programs and in what ways? What are the characteristics of an effective program? Are BU's programs the right size? Should BU have different kinds of

living-learning programs, e.g. more curriculum-based, more limited or extended in time, focused just on first and second year students, on third and fourth year students? If so, what kinds of programs ought we develop and how should they be developed? These questions are not meant as limits to what the committee considers, but as examples of some issues.

The committee will want to educate itself about programs at our peer institutions and other universities to spur new ideas and discover effective practices for use at BU.

WISE@Warren and Kilachand Honors College are not part of this review, but should be considered for purposes of comparison and as part of the suite of living-learning programs BU offers.

Initial Resources Available on the Committee's Blackboard Site

National Study of Living-Learning Programs (2007)

Boston University Specialty Community Guidebook

Document titled "Specialty Housing Information"

Data on university retention and graduation rates

Data on retention and graduation rates of BU students in specialty housing
(including Wise@Warren and Kilachand Honors College)