

RESIDENTIAL LEARNING COMMUNITY

RLC PRESENTATION INTRODUCTION

A large group presentation to the chapter and volunteers is an important first step as a Residential Learning Community. It is also a vital launch to the beginning of each new school year for orientation. The members of your chapter are the focus of the learning community. It is important to recognize the individual learning styles and enable members to develop their abilities through the learning community dynamics.

A quote from University of Illinois' Faculty Fellow, Dr. Miriam Pittenger:

“The Residential Learning Community, as the name indicates, represents a marriage of three main components: a residential facility, an emphasis on teaching and learning, and a sense of community. It is a concept whose time has come. In some of the freshman dormitories on campus, a wildly successful new program has arranged for students who share living space to enroll in some of the same classes together, thereby engendering a communal spirit among them. Those in charge of these programs have had to wrestle, however, with the formidable challenges of building a community from scratch, where none exists. The fraternity has obviously already taken care of that part. Further, they have already committed themselves to the ideals of the Balanced Man. Give them the proposed enhancements to the physical plant, and watch what happens. With all these elements in place, and the right sort of help and guidance from the faculty, parents, alumni and others upon whom they rely, I feel confident that they will quickly grow into the kind of Residential Learning Community administrators currently only dream of. As the saying goes from Kevin Costner's film *Field of Dreams*, 'If you build it, they will come.' This is a very exciting prospect.”

The main audience of this RLC presentation is students. Thus, it is essential to understand the perspectives of students enrolled in college today. From Creating Learning Communities, (pages 53-54) Shapiro and Levine write about student issues, goals, constraints, and resource demands:

Student Issues

The university is too big. Undergraduates get lost. How can we give undergraduates more value for their tuition dollars? The first two years are dominated by teaching assistants, not professors.

Students Goals

A small college experience, faculty mentors, connections with students from diverse backgrounds. A sense of community and connection to the intellectual, cultural, and career opportunities on campus. Opportunities to interact with students who share their interests. Career internships and travel experiences.

Student Constraints

New program, no one knows what to expect, no ground clear rules early in the process. Need clearer communication about the extra work involved. Required activities compete with athletic practice, band practice. Facilities designated for the program must be attractive. Other students on campus view the RLC or SigEp as elitist.

Student Resource Demands

Students get extra attention from faculty, program office staff (for example, “one-stop shopping” for registration.) Field trips, speakers, computer labs, and classrooms in the facility, classes in the facility.