

# It Takes a Village: Supporting First-Generation Students in a Living and Learning Community



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## What is a Living and Learning Community?

The term Living and Learning Program (LLP) or Living and Learning Community (LLC) are a relatively recent terms that have been used to describe what has been going on in residential living facilities for several years. These terms LLP or LLC are used to identify a specific type of thematic grouping of students that typically takes place in the residential living areas of campus at predominately four year institutions (Inkelas and Associates, 2004). According to the literature, LLPs are designed to create a sense of community that allows for greater faculty and peer interaction, increased opportunities for coordinated activities and social and academically supportive residential living environments (Shapiro and Levine, 1999). It is also noted that learning-communities where students take two or more classes together have been deemed a high-impact practice in regards to retaining and graduation Kuh (2008).

## Demographic Information of the 2018-2019 Cohort

<b>Total Number of Students: 44</b>	<b>Sex: 30 Female, 14 Male</b>
<b>In-state: 42 vs Out-of-State: 2</b>	
<b>Ethnicity/Race:</b> 3 Black Students, 1 Hispanic/Latino Student, 36 White Students, 3 Multi-Racial Students, 1 Student unidentified	<b>College Representation:</b> Ag, Food, and Environment, Arts and Sciences, Business and Economics, Health Sciences, Nursing, Public Health, Social Work

## Advising Model - The Village

Students that participate in the First-Generation Scholar LLC complete a participation contract. In this contract it lists all the requirements for the academic year. At the same time students are completing this contract they are also applying for Student Support Services. Student Support Services is a federally funded collegiate level TRIO Program that aims to support first-generation students, students with documented disabilities, and or students that meet the threshold for Pell Grant eligibility U.S Department of Education (2019). This partnership has proven to be extremely beneficial for our students as this provides students another level of support on campus.

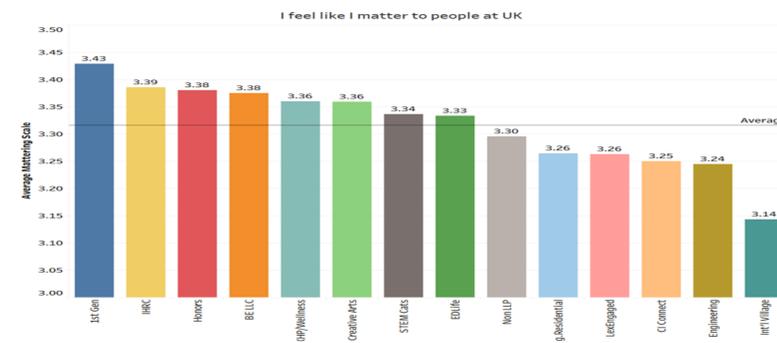
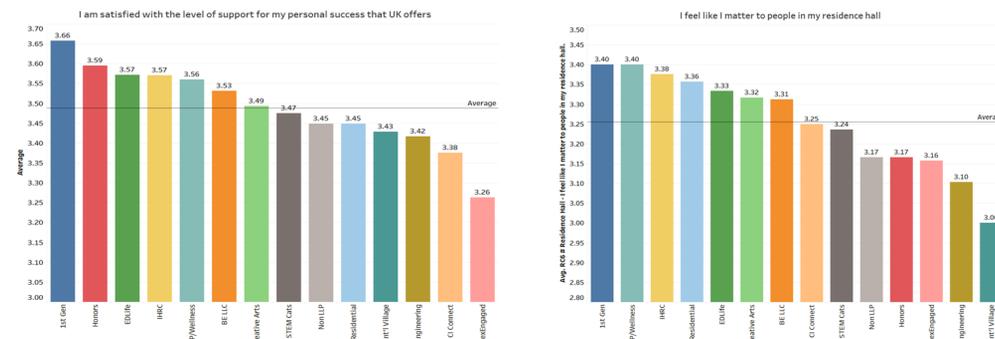
Student Meeting Requirements		
Advisor Type	Staff	Frequency of Meetings
Program	First-Generation Scholar LLC Director & First-Generation Student Advisor	Once per semester minimum
Program	Student Support Services	Once per semester minimum
Academic	Academic Advisor	Once per semester minimum

## Residential Curriculum

### programming model vs. curricular approach

Programming Model	Curricular Approach
Generalized	Clearly defined educational goals
Reactive	Clearly defined strategies
Focuses on a group	Learning is sequenced
Implementation often responsibility of RA	Focused on individual student
	Intentional & Outcome - based
	Based on assessment of student needs
	Specific lesson plans or guides
	Professional staff responsible for implementation

The image above depicts the programming model vs. curricular approach of the 2018 residential curriculum created by the University of Kentucky Office of Residence Life.



The above group of images are from the spring residence life sense of belonging survey. This survey was distributed to all students living in residence halls during the spring semester.

## What Makes First-Generation Scholars so Unique?

Our students come from a variety of backgrounds. According to the 2014 report from the National Center for Education Statistics it was indicated that 34% of undergraduates have parents who never entered higher education and another 28% have parents who entered but never completed NASPA (2017). Additionally, these students are often associated with being low-income, older, typically from rural areas and or underserved inner cities. Unlike several programs that use a student's socioeconomic status or racial background to determine eligibility for participation we do not. According to the literature to combat the negative effects of deficit approaches, institutions are utilizing the principles from positive psychology to shape programs, services, and advising. The intention is to not focus directly on these struggles but to create environments where the strongest qualities of a student can be identified, understood, and nurtured toward strengthening self-efficacy, resilience, and belonging NASPA (2017).

Additionally, students in this community are required to meet with an academic coach at least once an academic year. Community participants are also assigned a peer mentor in which they formally meet monthly. Students also have monthly meetings with residence hall staff such as resident advisors and in some cases resident directors.

In order for this model to effectively work we have to have strong lines of communication among all parties. The utilization of effective tools and technologies are crucial in this model. These technologies include, phone, email, a centralized online note system, access to Tableau, and a centralized academic alert system. It is not enough to just have the tools but, to use them effectively. In addition to all of these tools, there are meetings that are intentionally scheduled among the program and academic advisors to ensure students' needs are being taken care of and they are supported.

Other individuals in the village include, but are not limited to:

- Transformative Learning
- Counseling Center
- Stuckert Career Center
- Community of Concern
- Residence Life
- Student Academic Life
- Leadership Education
- Center for Academic Resources and Enrichment Services
- Office of Institutional Diversity

## References

Inkelas, K. K., and Associates. (2004). National Study of Living-Learning Programs: 2004 report of findings. Retrieved March 30, 2006, from National Study of Living-Learning Programs Website: [http://www.livelearnstudy.net/images/NSLLP\\_2004\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](http://www.livelearnstudy.net/images/NSLLP_2004_Final_Report.pdf).

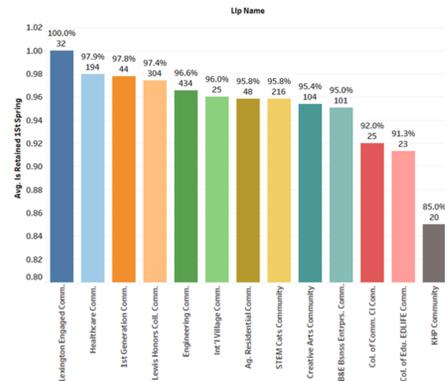
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NASPA. (2017). Center for First-Generation Student Success, First-Generation Students: Approaching Enrollment, Intersectional Identities, & Asset-Based Success [Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://firstgen.naspa.org/blog/first-generation-students-approaching-enrollment-intersectional-identities-and-asset-based-success>.

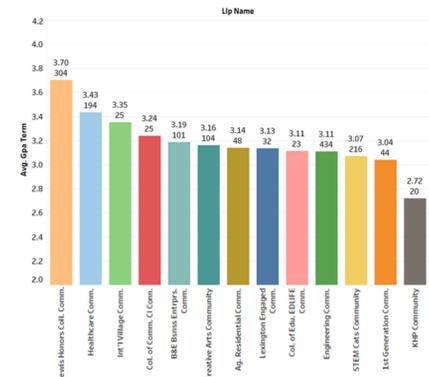
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LLP Fall 2018 Spring Retention Rates



LLP Fall 2018 GPAs



The above graphs depict the retention rate from fall '18 to spring '19 of all LLPs (Left). The above graph depicts the fall GPA for all LLPs at the university (Right).