



National Learning Communities Conference (NLCC): Indianapolis Indiana
November 15, 2019

Assessing and Improving Learning Communities

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Research and Decision Support (IRDS)**

Trends in Assessment

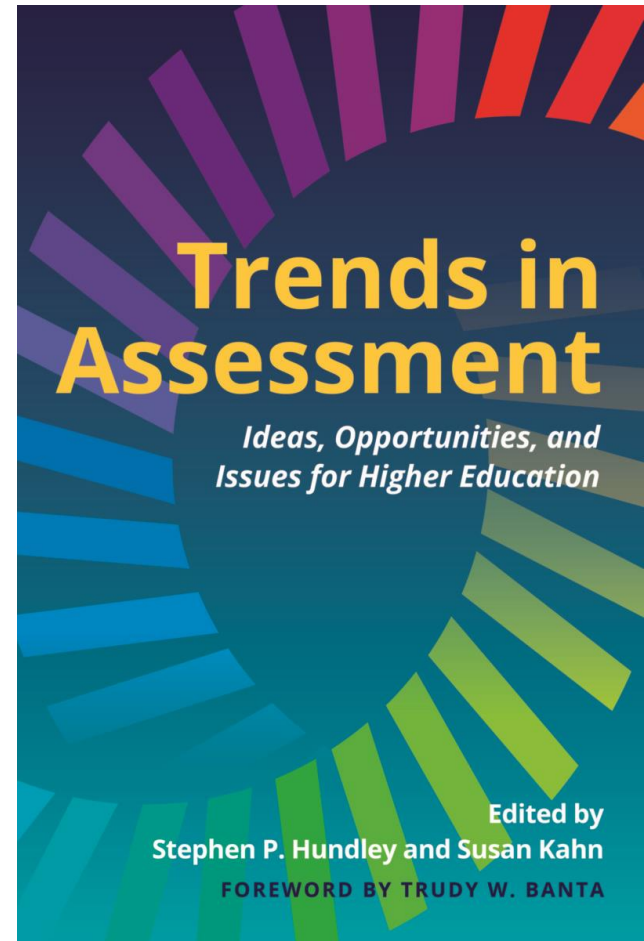
10 Meta-Trends

What They Mean for Assessing and Improving Learning Communities



Trends in Assessment: Meta-Trends

1. Assessment continues to make important contributions to understanding and improving student learning and success
2. Need to navigate tensions between accountability and improvement in higher education
3. Sound assessment programs continue to require leadership and broadened stakeholder involvement
4. Inclusive, equity-orientated, and reflective assessment approaches are necessary to meet the needs of diverse students our institutions serve
5. Assessment outcomes broadening to include students' personal, academic, and professional development
6. Authentic measures of student learning necessary and valued
7. Assessment is expanding focus to include learning processes and practices that support achievement of outcomes
8. Ongoing high quality professional development essential for well-designed assessment practices
9. Assessment work must be valued and recognized
10. Assessment remains a work in progress



Meta-Trend 1: Assessment Continues To Make Important Contributions To Understanding And Improving Student Learning And Success

“Systematic approaches to assessment can both demonstrate and ensure that institutional stakeholders take student success and learning seriously and that the results of assessment are communicated transparently to various internal and external audiences” Hundley, Kahn, Barbee, 2019, (p. 206)



Some Purposes of Learning Community Assessment

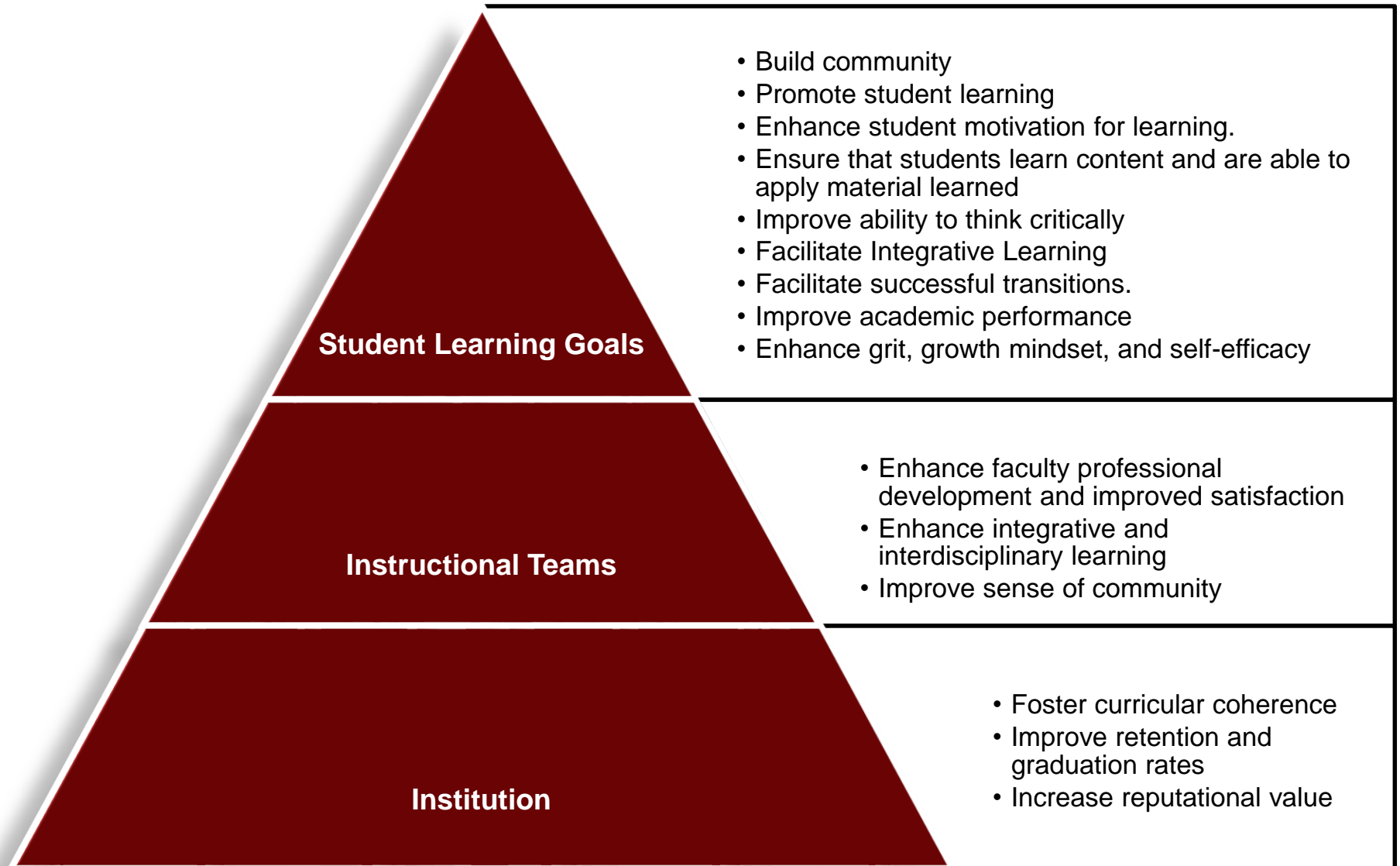
- Determine if Learning Community programs are attaining intended goals.
- Determine if students learn intended outcomes.
- Enable students to assess own strengths.
- Allow more opportunities to improve student learning experiences and LC programs.
- Help institutions demonstrate accountability or determine worth and value of Learning Community programs.
- Make data-supported decisions.



Questions

- What are the goals of your Learning Communities?
- What are your intended outcomes?

Levels of Learning Community Goals



Integrative Learning and Thinking

- “an approach that highlights the importance of addressing real-world issues relevant to students’ life experiences and interests” (Hinckley, 2010).
- “connecting skills and knowledge from multiple sources and experiences; applying theory to practice in various settings; utilizing diverse and even contradictory points of view; and, understanding issues and positions contextually.” (A Statement on Integrative Learning, AACU, 2004)
- “...an understanding and a disposition that a student builds across the curriculum and co-curriculum, from making simple connections among ideas and experiences to synthesizing and transferring learning to new, complex situation within and beyond the campus” (AACU VALUE Rubric, 2007).



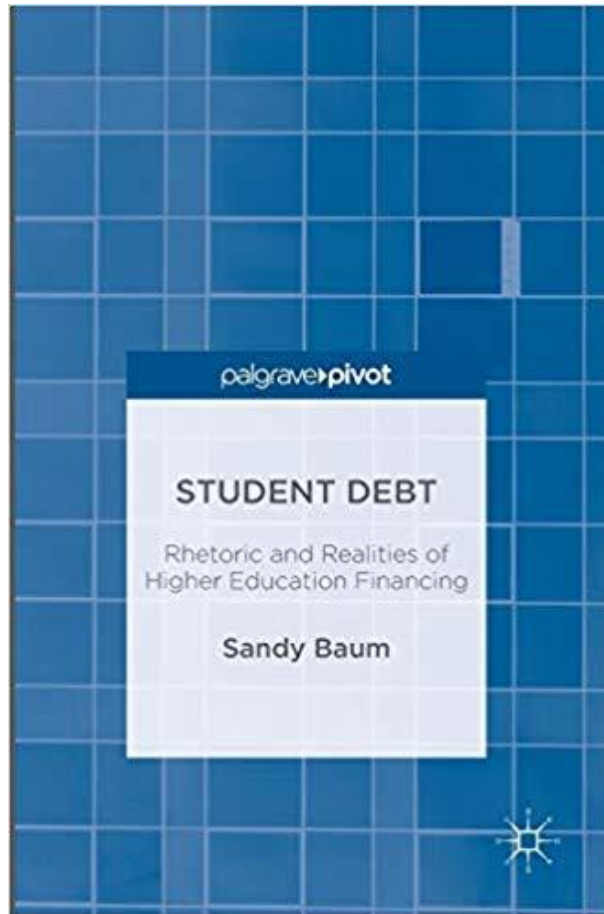
Meta Trend 2: Need to Navigate Tensions Between Accountability and Improvement in Higher Education

“Scandals [the College Admissions Scandal] erode public trust and add to skepticism regarding the actual value of a college degree. Yet despite this skepticism, research demonstrates that virtually every aspect of life and community is improved by higher education.”
(Bringing the True Value of Higher Education to the Forefront, Inside Higher Ed., Elizabeth Paul, 2019)

“...pressures to retain and support students to timely degree completion compel institutions to perform efficiently in moving through their educational pathways while still designing and implementing meaningful experiences for these students.” Hundley, Kahn, Barbee, 2019, (p. 206)



Highly Recommend!



Need to Consider Assessment to Improve and Prove Value of Learning Communities Education

Formative Assessment

- Assessment purpose is LC improvement.
- Typically conducted during the development or improvement of a program and it is conducted, often more than once, for in-house staff or faculty of the program with the intent to improve.
- It typically involves qualitative feedback from both students and instructors that focuses on experiences and the processes leading to intended outcomes.

Summative Assessment

- Seeks to monitor educational outcomes, often for purposes of external accountability.
- Assessment of learning and is contrasted with formative assessment, which is assessment for learning.
- Provides information on the program's efficacy (its ability to do what it was designed to do). For example, did the students learn what they were supposed to learn after participating in LC program.



Meta Trend 3: Sound Assessment Programs Continue to Require Leadership and Broadened Stakeholder Involvement

“...our assessment activities should be aimed providing information for decision-making using multiple levels of analyses: courses, specific educational programs (e.g., HIPs and student affairs interventions), degree granting program outcomes, and at the institutional level.” (Hansen, 2019)



Using Assessment to Sustain and Prove Your Learning Community Program

1. Ensure Strategic Plan alignment
2. Strive for major campus initiative alignment
3. Communicate results
4. Identify champions



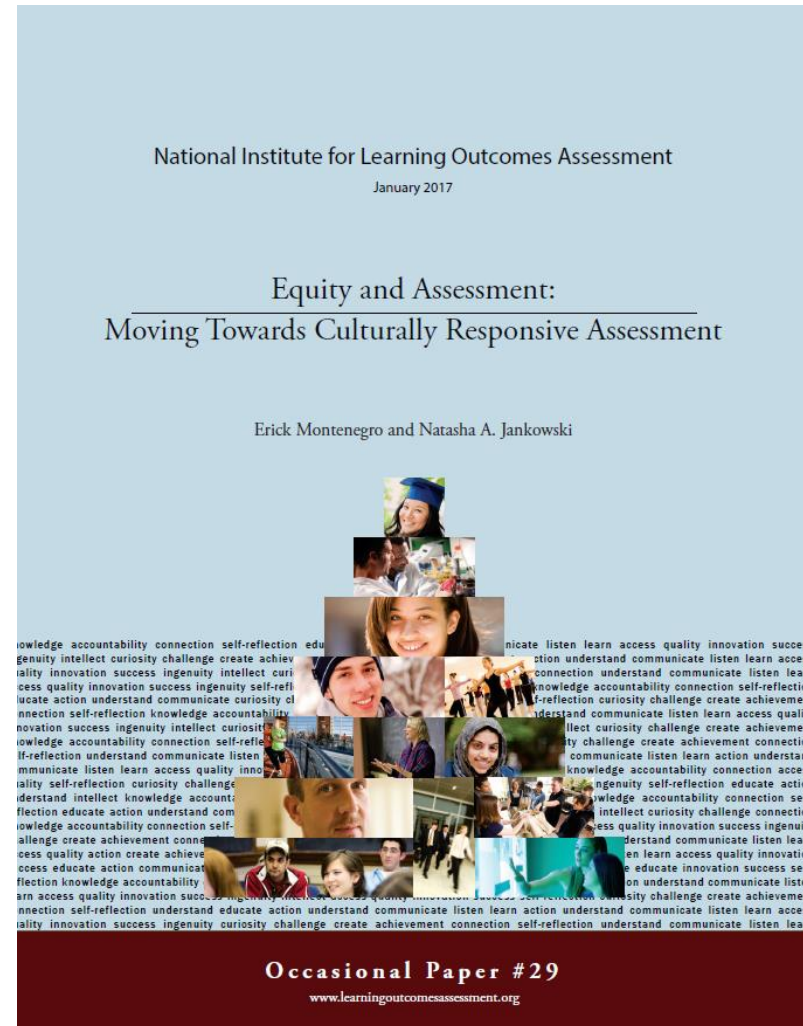
Meta Trend 4: Inclusive, Equity-orientated, And Reflective Assessment Approaches Are Necessary To Meet The Needs Of Diverse Students Our Institutions Serve

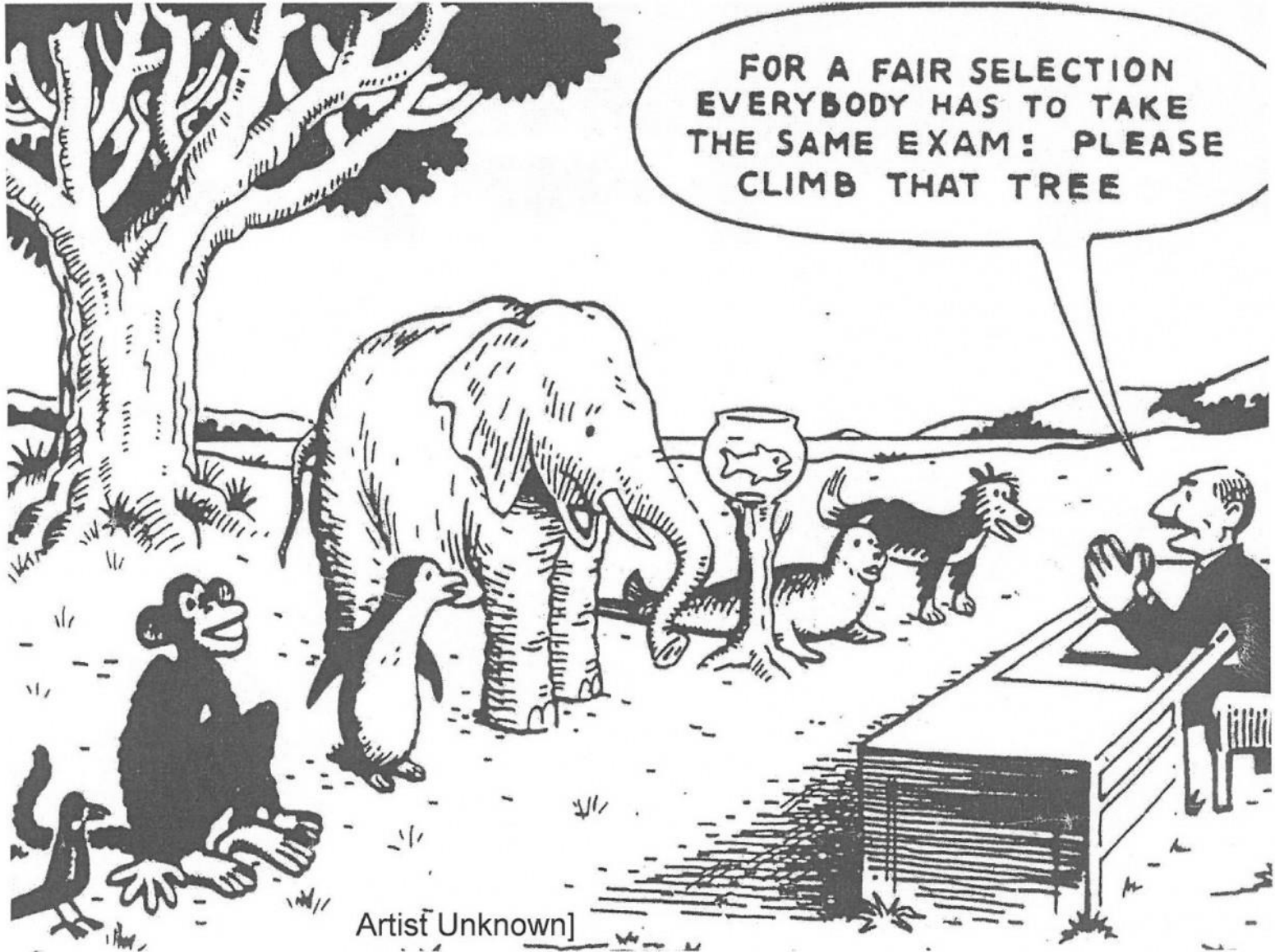
1. Incorporate equitable assessment approaches that account for student diversity and ensure that all students have learning opportunities responsive to their needs.
2. Need to assess that all students have equal access to high quality learning experiences.
3. As colleges educate a more diverse and global student population, there is greater need to make sure every student succeeds regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender identity, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, age, ability, etc. (Montenegro & Jankowski, 2017).
4. Need to take into account equity and social justice issues or assessment activities may sustain privileges and validate certain types of learning and evidence over others, and this can reinforce within students the false notion that they do not belong in higher education.



Culturally Responsive Assessment

1. “Considers the student populations the institution serves, uses language that is appropriate for all students when developing learning outcomes, acknowledging students’ differences in the planning phases of an assessment effort, developing and/or using assessment tools that are appropriate for different students, and being intentional in using assessment results to improve learning for all students” (Montenegro & Jankowski, p.10).





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Equity means that every student has what they need to succeed

EQUALITY



EQUITY

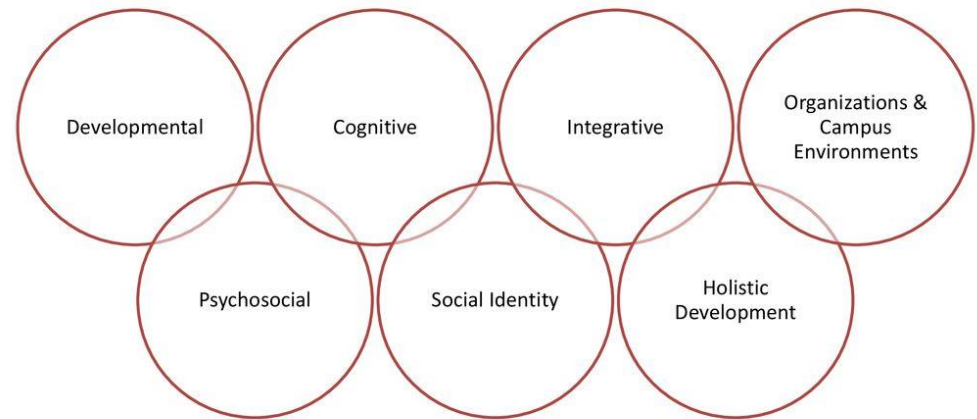


Meta Trend 5: Assessment Outcomes Broadening To Include Students' Personal, Academic, And Professional Development

- Assessing students' experiences holistically from transition to career readiness.
- How does your Learning Community program fit into overall student experience?

CWU | Central Washington University

Types of Student Development Theory

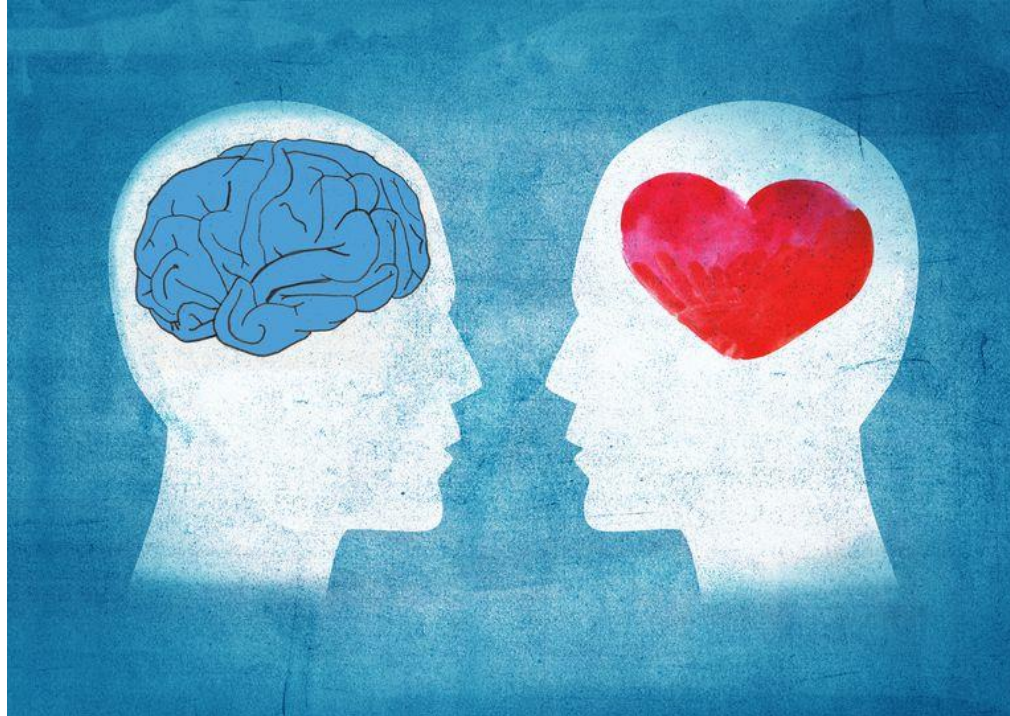


Consider Cognitive and Affective Domains When Assessing LC Outcomes

Cognitive Domain

(thinking
intellectual)

- Synthesis
- Recollection
- Evaluation
- Comprehension
- Analysis
- Integrative thinking
- Professional development
- Ability to communicate learning



Affective/ Motivational Domain

(emotion and
motivation)

- Motivation
- Satisfaction
- Sense of Belonging
- Attitudes
- Self-Efficacy
- Values
- Feelings
- Career readiness
- Grit
- Growth mindset



Meta Trend 6: Authentic Measures Of Student Learning Necessary And Valued

- With authentic, embedded assessment tasks students are asked to demonstrate what they know and are able to do in meaningful ways.
- Authentic assessment tasks are often multidimensional and require higher levels of cognitive thinking such as problem solving and critical thinking.
- Embedded assessment means that “that opportunities to assess student progress and performance are integrated into the instructional materials and are virtually indistinguishable from the day-to-day classroom activities”(Wilson and Sloane, 2000).



Direct Measures of Student Learning

1. Require students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills.
2. They provide tangible, visible and self-explanatory evidence of what students have and have not learned as a result of a course, program, or activity (Suskie, 2004, 2009; Palomba and Banta, 1999).
3. Examples of direct student learning measures include objective tests, essays, presentations, classroom assignments, and portfolios.
4. Integrative and Applied Learning VALUE Rubric may be a useful tool.
<https://www.aacu.org/value-rubrics>



Assessment of Student Work: A Direct Measure of Learning

1. “No assessment of knowledge, conceptual understanding, or thinking or performance skills should consist of indirect evidence alone” (Linda Suskie, 2009).

Indirect Measures

- Capture students' perceptions of their knowledge and skills
- They supplement direct measures of learning by providing information about how and why learning is occurring.
- Students' perceptions of the extent to which courses and assignments have enhanced their achievement of the stated learning outcomes may be obtained by using the following methods: self-assessment, peer-feedback, end-of-course evaluations, questionnaires, focus groups, or exit interviews.



Meta Trend 7: Assessment Is Expanding Focus To Include Learning Processes And Practices That Support Achievement Of Outcomes

- **“To engage students at high levels, these practices must be done well” (Kuh).**
- Process assessment activities ensure that learning experiences and educational interventions are implemented as planned, reaching intended student populations, and have fidelity (contain the essential elements and practices to ensure intended outcomes are attained).
- Taxonomies at IUPUI and California State University Northridge: “Conditions that Matter”



High Impact Conditions and Matter (Processes)

- Expectations set at appropriately high levels
- Significant investment of time and effort
- Interactions with faculty and peers
- Experiences with diversity
- Frequent and constructive feedback
- Periodic and structured opportunities for reflection
- Relevance through real-world applications
- Public demonstration of competence

(Kuh, 2008; Kuh & O'Donnell, 2013)



Learning Communities as an Effective High Impact Practice

- ★ Be intentional in linking courses.
- ★ Support students in traditional gateway courses and “weed-out” courses that have high rates of failure.
- ★ Consider tying an extended orientation or integrative seminar to the learning community.
- ★ Use instructional teams.
- ★ Invest in faculty development to ensure that courses are fully integrated, with coordinated materials, assignments, out-of-class trips, and grading rubrics.
- ★ Use engaging pedagogies.

Jayne E. Brownell and Lynn E. Swaner, 2010



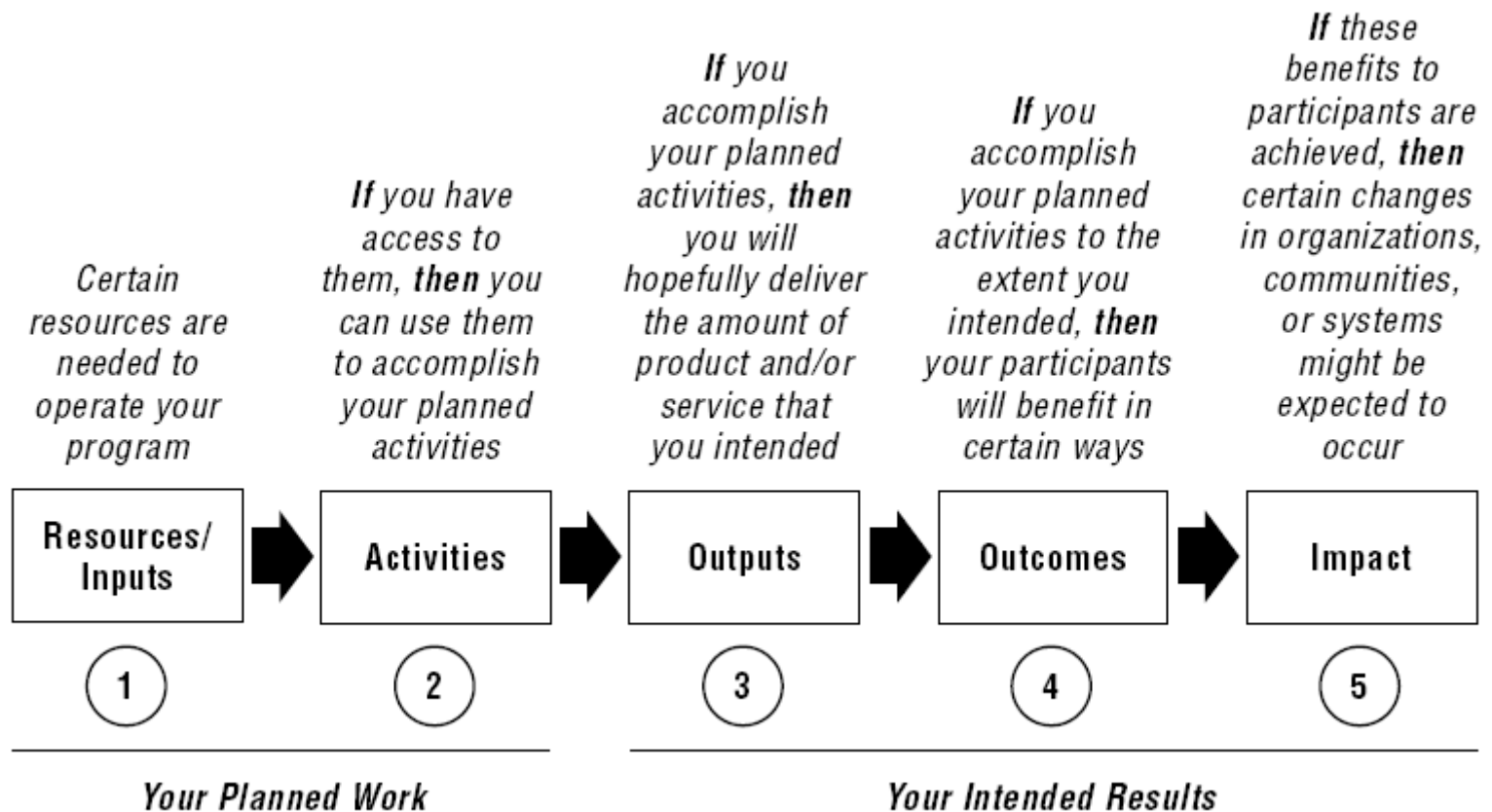
Planning for Learning and Assessment

T.W. Banta

1. What general outcome are you seeking?	2. How would you know it (the outcome) if you saw it? (What will the student know or be able to do?)	3. How will you help students learn it? (in class or out of class)	4. How could you measure each of the desired behaviors listed in #2?	5. What are the assessment findings?	6. What improvements might be based on assessment findings?



Logic Models Can Help You Identify LC Processes Necessary to Attain Intended Outcomes



Mixed-Method Approaches

1. Allows researchers to:
 - Triangulate findings from multiple sources.
 - Converge or corroborate findings.
 - Strengthen the internal validity of the studies.
 - Create elaborated understandings or fuller picture of abstract or complex constructs such as “engagement” or “integrative learning” (Complimentary)
 - Develop subsequent methods.
 - Spark new ideas and thinking (Initiation Purposes).
 - Represent different values (stakeholders may value or find certain methods more credible).



Qualitative Assessment

- Brings Awareness Of Program Implementation Differences
- Provides In-Depth Understanding of Student Responses and Interactions
- Represents Part of a Long Term Strategy of Formative Evaluation



Quantitative Assessment

- Conduct quasi-experimental designs employing multivariate analyses of covariance, repeated measures MANCOVAs, and hierarchical regression procedures.
- Conduct analyses to determine LC effects on academic performance, retention rates, and DFW rates.
- Describe retention rates and GPAs in defined populations over semesters and years.
- Examine LC participants compared to non-participants with regard to GPA and retention while adjusting for academic preparation and background differences.
- Examine predicted vs. actual retention, course grades, and DFW rates.
- Administer student surveys to assess student needs, satisfaction, engagement, program impacts, reasons for leaving, etc.



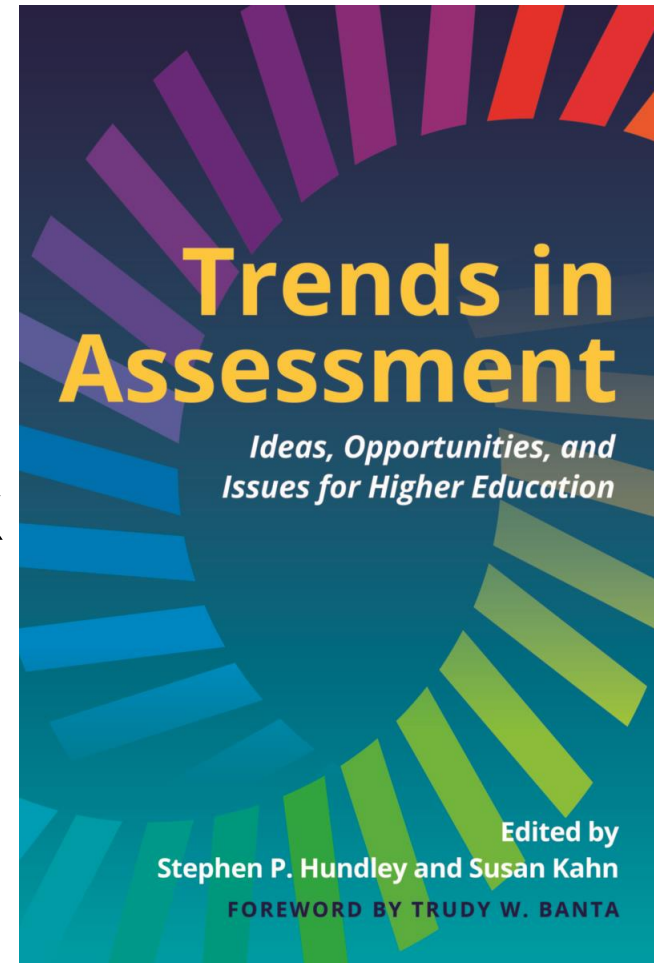
Meta Trend 8: Ongoing High Quality Professional Development Essential For Well-designed Assessment Practices

- Name interdisciplinary committees (develop an advisory committee with faculty members represented)
- Encourage faculty research on LCs so they can contribute to the scholarship of teaching/learning and publish in their disciplines.
- Read and discuss current literature on learning/assessment
- Name faculty fellows to engage in LC assessment and planning
- Attend conferences together
- Bring experts to campus
- Share good practices
- Work together on learning communities



Trends in Assessment: Meta-Trends

9. Assessment work must be valued and recognized
10. Assessment remains a work in progress



National Literature

Learning communities have been advocated as effective interventions for enhancing:

- Student Retention (Hansen & Schmidt; 2017; Tinto, 2003)
- Engagement levels (Yancy, Sutton-Haywood, Hermitte, Dawkins, Rainey, & Parker, 2008; Zhao and Kuh, 2004),
- Student learning and academic success (Bonet & Walters, 2016; Hegler, 2004; Henscheild, 2004; Kuh, 2008; Stassen 2003).
- Opportunities for service learning (Oates & Leavitt, 2003),
- Critical thinking and integrative learning (Lardner & Malnarich, 2008, 2008/2009, 2009).
- Sense of Belonging to the Institution (Schussler & Fierros, 2008)



Current Research on Learning Community Programs

1. Most published studies focus on retention, persistence, GPAs, and engagement (e.g., National Survey of Student Engagement – NSSE)
2. Few empirical studies on metacognition, deep learning, and integrative learning.
3. Most research is correlational and there have been few rigorous studies conducted on learning community effectiveness.



Examples from IUPUI

Credit for many examples IRDS colleagues Steve Graunke and Jessicah Rauch

Institutional Context: Indiana University- Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI)

- **Recognized for Learning Communities & the First Year Experience (U.S. News)**
- **For 15 consecutive years, U.S. News has highlighted IUPUI for offering programs that help ensure a positive collegiate experience for new freshman and undergraduates**
- **Large Urban Public Research University**
- **Student population of about 30,000 students**
- **First-Time cohort just over 3,600 and New External Transfers just over 1,200 each year**
- **Over 250 degree programs from both Indiana & Purdue Universities.**
- **Guided by the Profiles of Undergraduate Learning (Communicator, Innovator, Problem Solver, Community Contributor)**
- **55% of First-Year students commute to campus and 42% are Federal Pell Recipients**



IUPUI Learning Communities Context

1. Gateway Learning Communities

- Students co-enroll in two or more courses and explore a central theme with experiences in and out of the classroom, forming connections between classwork and their life experiences. First-Year Seminar instructor works to integrate learning connected to the theme into the FYS course while involvement from the linked course instructor(s) is not required.

2. Themed Learning Communities

- Same as GLC except course instructors work collaboratively to intentionally connect the content of their courses through assignments and activities, and meet as a team with the students. All TLCs have a First year Seminar.

3. Residential Learning Communities

- Theme and major based. Students live together in campus housing. Common Curricular components and courses are not part of this model.



Other FYE Interventions



1. First-Year Seminars

- Taught by faculty member and peer leader. Designed to assist entering students as they form connections with the IUPUI community, including other students, faculty, and advisors. Seminars are structured around the fundamental and powerful concepts of belonging, transitioning, and planning that represent the conditions necessary for student success in college and beyond. Different first-year seminars are sponsored by the various academic units.

2. Summer Bridge

- Bridge is five-day program occurring before the start of the semester. Designed to help students feel prepared for their first year of college and beyond. During Bridge, students make new friends, learn more about their school and major, and start connecting to campus activities and resources. They even have to opportunity to get started on some of their fall course work.



Assessment Methods

- Employ Mixed-Method designs using qualitative and quantitative methods.
- Attempt to understand how LCs experiences influence students' success levels (e.g., retention rates, GPAs, engagement, civic outcomes).
- Examine different models and interventions.
- Disaggregate data on learning community student success outcomes by race/ethnicity, SES and/or parents' education.
- Administer end-of-course questionnaires (designed to provide information on students' perceptions of course benefits, learning outcomes, satisfaction levels, why decided to enroll)
- Administer National Survey of Student Engagement.
- Conduct focus groups and individual interviews.
- Collect direct measures of student learning (e.g., embedded course assessment and e-portfolios).
- Guided by taxonomy on what makes LCs a High Impact Practice.



Outcomes by Learning Community Intervention

	N	First Fall Semester GPA Mean	Retained in Spring at IUPUI Percentage	Retained in Spring at any IU Percentage	Year 1 Cum GPA Mean	Fall-Fall retention at IUPUI Percentage	Fall-Fall retention at any IU Percentage
<i>No intervention</i>	209	2.40	48%	48%	2.59	54%	56%
<i>FYS with no Bridge or TLC/GLC component</i>	1,328	2.62	83%	84%	2.67	69%	72%
<i>Bridge no TLC/GLC</i>	807	2.76	90%	90%	2.74	76%	78%
<i>TLC No Bridge</i>	549	2.82	89%	89%	2.73	72%	77%
<i>GLC no Bridge</i>	644	2.75	86%	89%	2.69	68%	73%
<i>Linked Bridge and TLC</i>	74	2.89	95%	95%	2.77	80%	81%
<i>Linked Bridge and GLC</i>	38	2.58	92%	92%	2.53	68%	71%
<i>All</i>	3,649	2.70	84%	85%	2.70	70%	73%



Understanding Who Participates

	N	Female	African American	Latinx	Direct Admit	Days before census	Total Credit Hours	Tested into remedial math	High School GPA	SAT score
		Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Mean	Mean	Percentage	Mean	Mean
<i>No intervention</i>	209	45%	11%	8%	59%	37.6	10.4	26%	3.46	1146
<i>FYS with no Bridge or TLC/GLC component</i>	1,328	54%	5%	9%	44%	50.0	14.9	33%	3.50	1146
<i>Bridge no TLC/GLC</i>	807	59%	12%	16%	51%	62.0	15.3	38%	3.48	1117
<i>TLC No Bridge</i>	549	60%	7%	10%	52%	50.8	15.2	41%	3.46	1124
<i>GLC no Bridge</i>	644	68%	7%	9%	33%	54.1	15.2	47%	3.47	1090
<i>Linked Bridge and TLC</i>	74	68%	8%	16%	65%	61.4	15.6	59%	3.39	1073
<i>Linked Bridge and GLC</i>	38	97%	3%	18%	8%	63.6	15.6	47%	3.47	1095
<i>All</i>	3,649	59%	8%	11%	46%	53.1	14.9	38%	3.48	1124



Comparing Themed Learning Communities to Gateway Learning Communities

Significant Differences between TLC and GLC

Please indicate how much your experience in the Learning Community helped you...

	TLC mean	GLC mean	Sig.
Consider problems and issues from multiple perspectives/point of view (ethnic, racial, cultural, religious, etc.)	5.06	4.76	.010
Apply what I learned in one course to another course in my learning community	5.10	4.58	.003
Apply knowledge gained in learning community courses to broader community or social issues	4.94	4.57	.015



2018 TLC Impact on First-Year GPA

	N	First Year GPA	Adjusted GPA*
TLC	595	2.71	2.78
Non-Participants	2672	2.69	2.68
Overall	3267	2.69	

Note 1: Only FYS participants. Students who withdrew from a TLC were counted as non-participants. Excluding students who were missing data on one or more covariates.

Note 2: Differences were statistically significant based on Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) results ($p < .007$).

Note 3: Partial Eta Squared indicated a very a small effect size.

* Covariates included in the model were High School GPA, SAT Score, Enrollment Date (proxy for student motivation and commitment), and Income Level (received a Pell Grant or Not dummy coded where 1 = Received Pell Grant and 0 = Did Not Receive a Pell Grant).



2018 TLC Impact on First-Year Retention

	N	First Year Retention	Adjusted Retention*
TLC	596	73%	70%
Non-Participants	2711	70%	75%
Overall	3307	71%	

Note 1: Only FYS participants. Students who withdrew from a TLC were counted as non-participants. Excluding students who were missing data on one or more covariates.

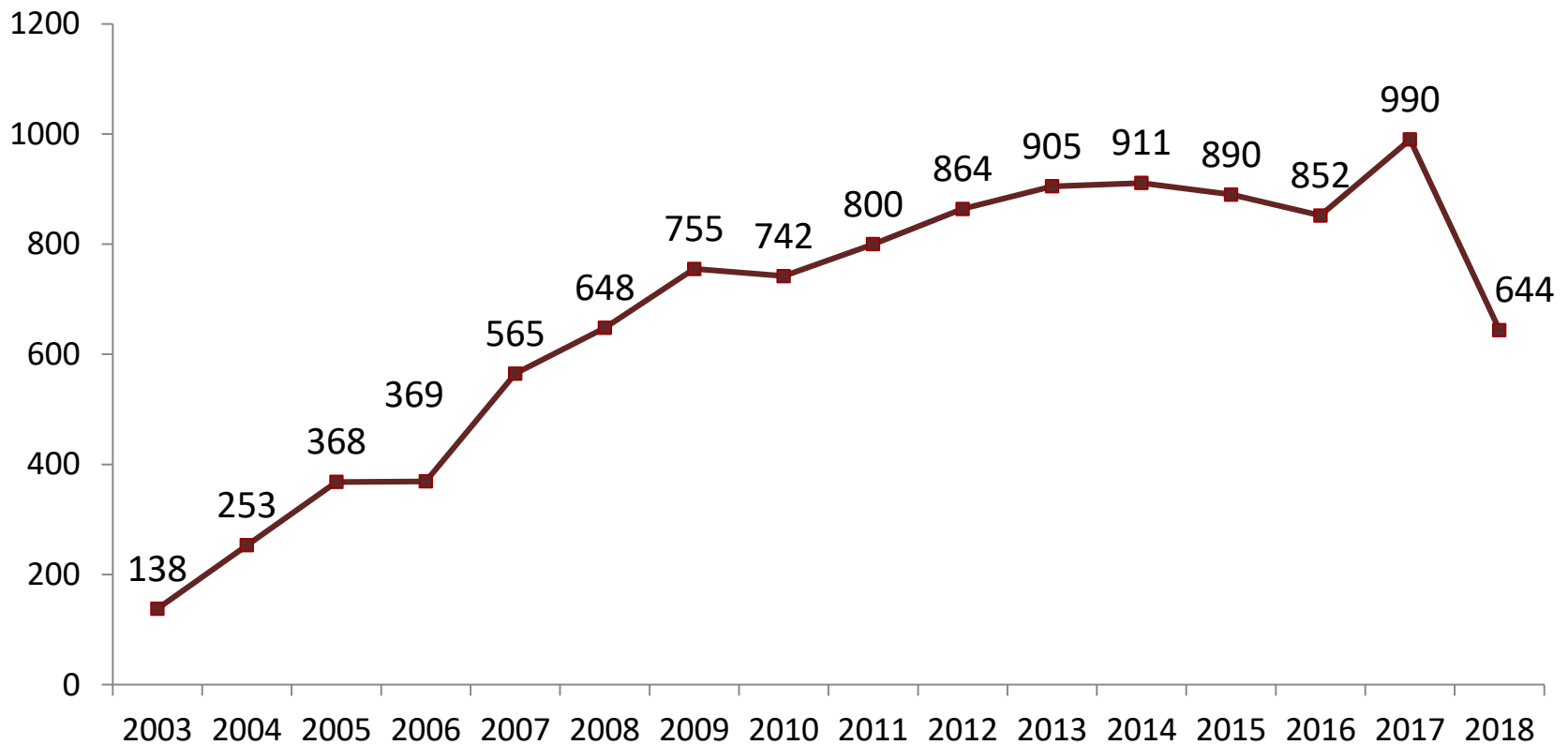
Note 2: Differences were statistically significant based on Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) results ($p < .014$).

Note 3: Partial Eta Squared indicated a very a small effect size.

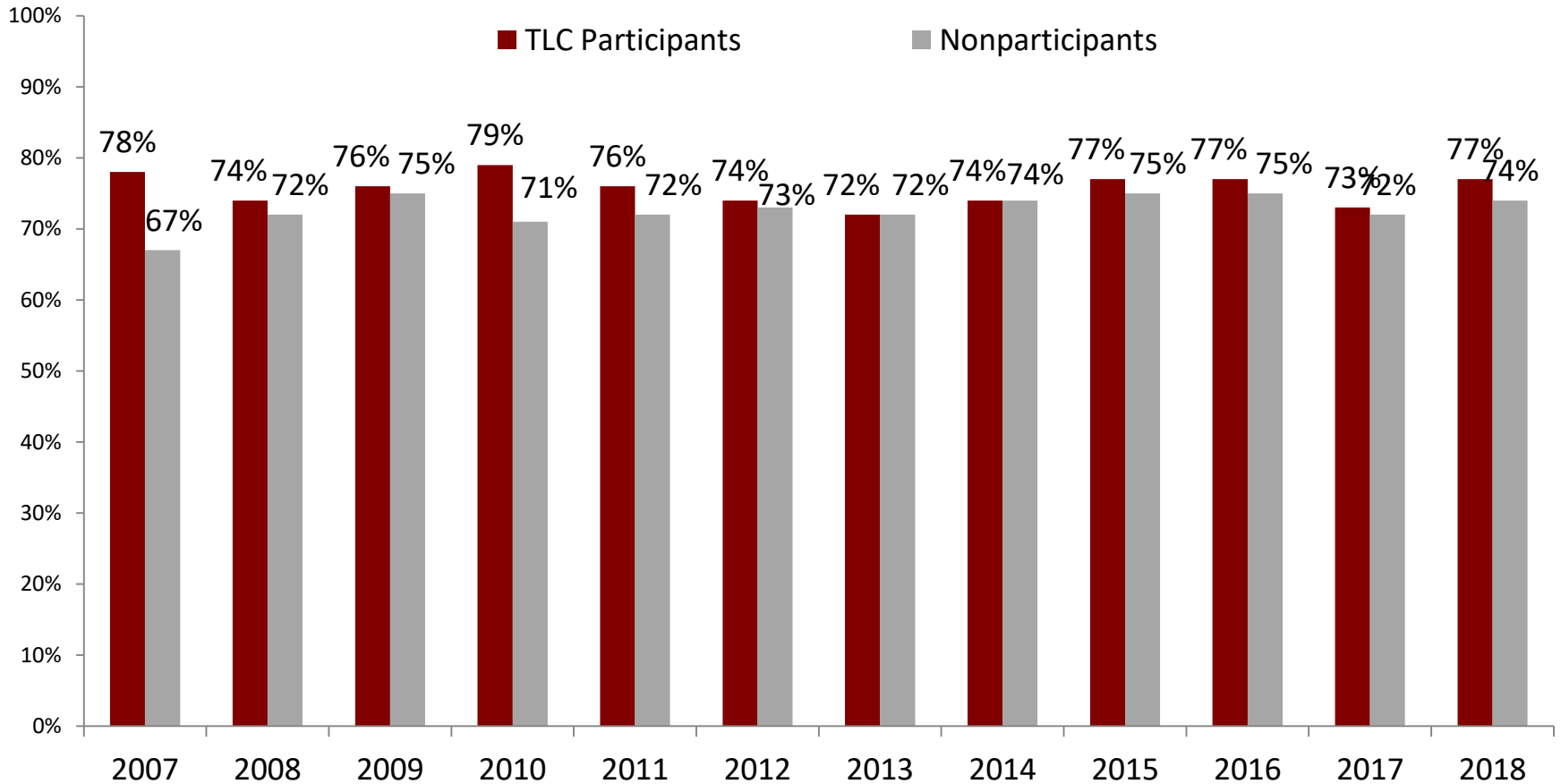
* Covariates included in the model were High School GPA, SAT Score, Enrollment Date (proxy for student motivation and commitment), and Income Level (received a Pell Grant or Not dummy coded where 1 = Received Pell Grant and 0 = Did Not Receive a Pell Grant).



TLC Growth: First-Year Students



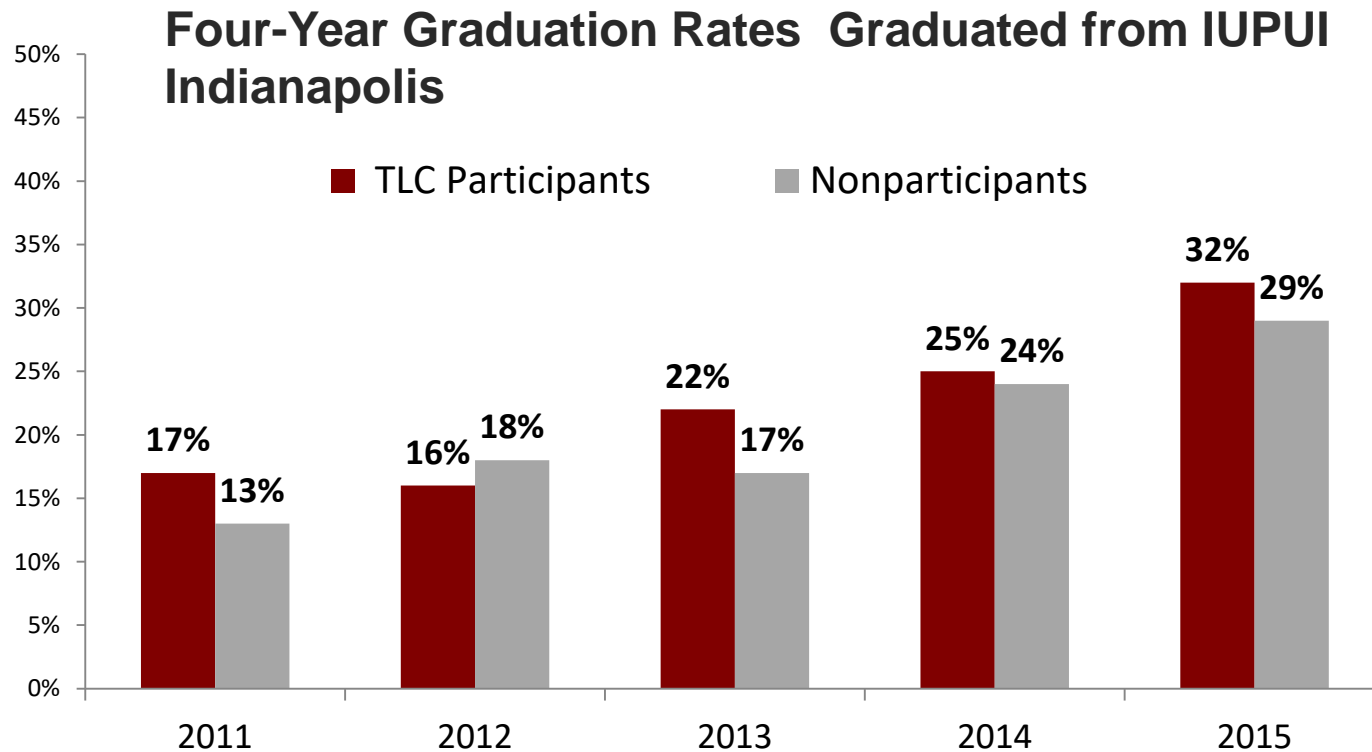
TLC Participants' One-Year Retention Rates Compared to Nonparticipants



Note: One-year retention rates are significantly higher for TLC participants compared to nonparticipants even when taking academic preparation and demographics into account for the 2007, 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2018 cohorts (HS GPAs, SAT scores, income level, and admit date). Based on logistic regression results. Comparison group is First-Year Seminar Participants. Retained any IU campus.



First-Time, Full-Time Cohort University College Students Only – Assessing Longer Term Benefits



Underserved Students Participation and Outcomes: 2018 TLCs

Student Characteristic	TLC Participants				Nonparticipants			
	N	One-Year Retention (any IU)	One-Year Retention (IUPUI IN)	FY GPA	N	One-Year Retention (any IU)	One-Year Retention (IUPUI IN)	FY GPA
African American	45	76%	73%	2.41	212	66%	62%	2.25
Latinx	68	75%	69%	2.62	320	74%	69%	2.60
Afr. American, Latino,(a) Two or More Races	156	76%	72%	2.56	695	71%	66%	2.51
First Generation	195	70%	66%	2.61	876	69%	65%	2.48
Received Federal Pell Grant	283	73%	70%	2.62	1,087	71%	68%	2.53
Twenty First Century Scholars State Aid	110	68%	65%	2.52	463	71%	67%	2.44
O'Bannon State Aid	135	80%	76%	2.76	476	75%	72%	2.64

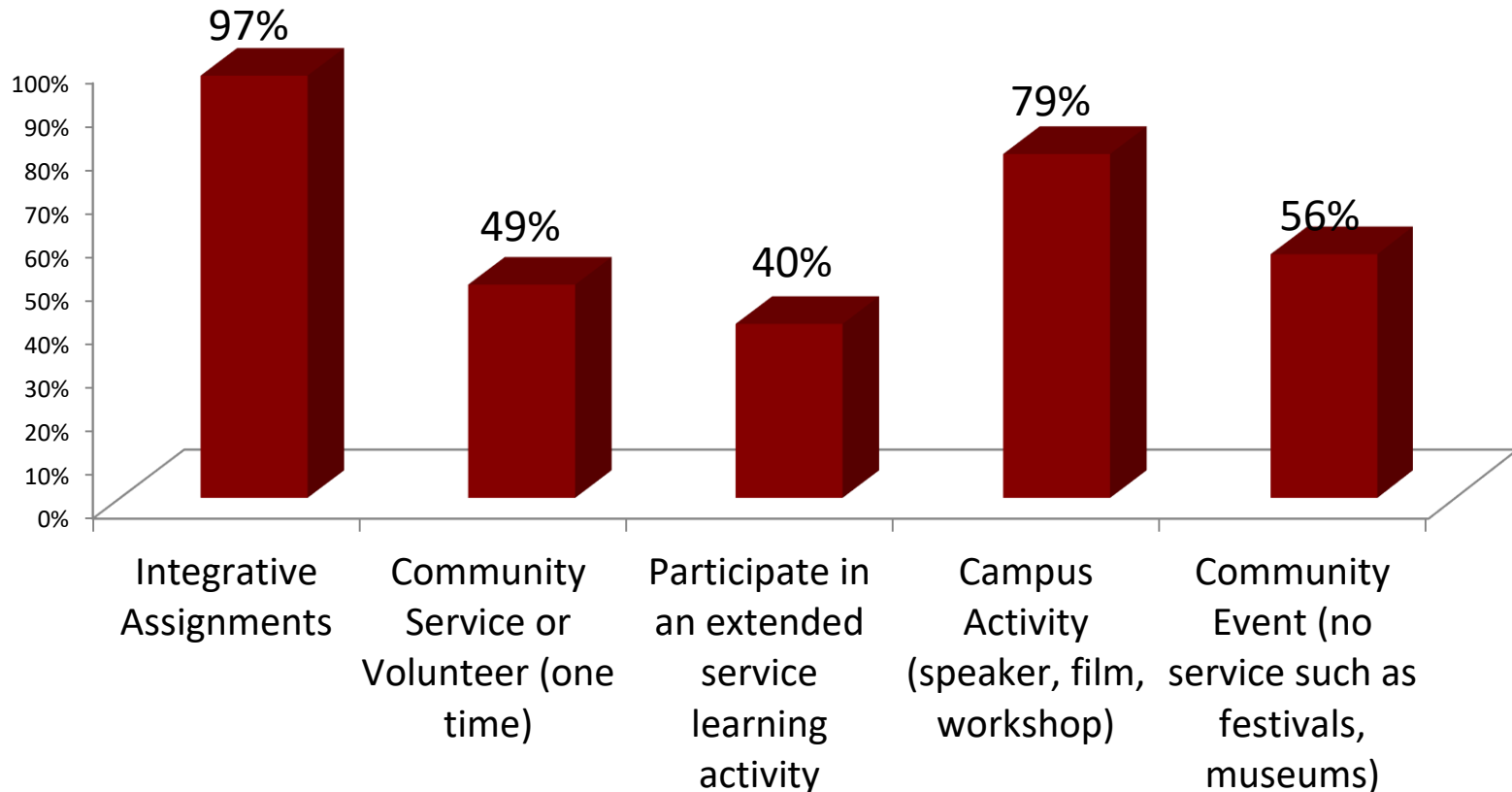
Bolded items significantly different based on independent samples t-test or chi-square results (or are meaningfully different)



Understanding TLC Processes: Engaging Experiences

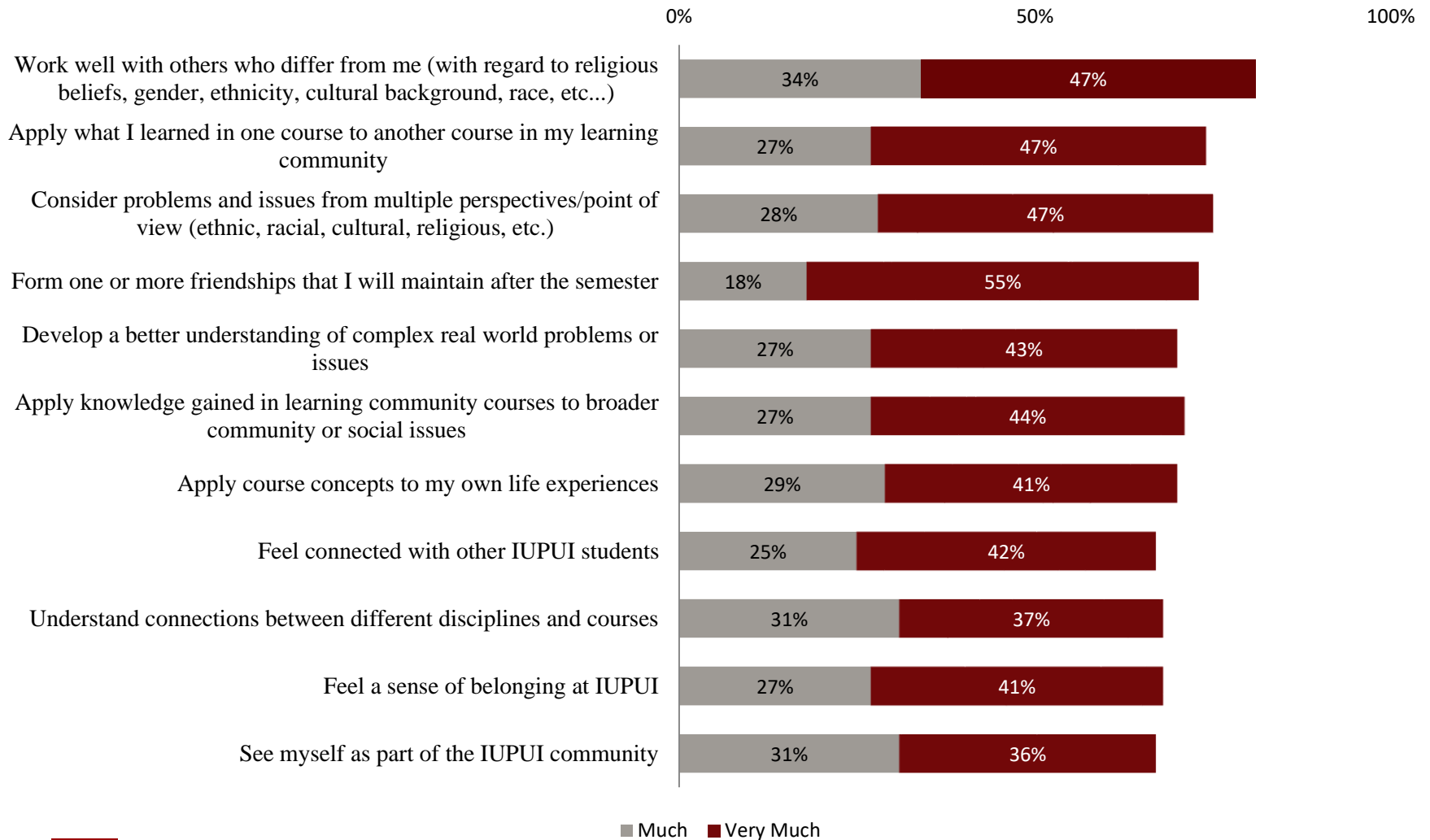
Fall 2018. Students' self-report on end-of-course questionnaire.

% TLC Students Participating in...



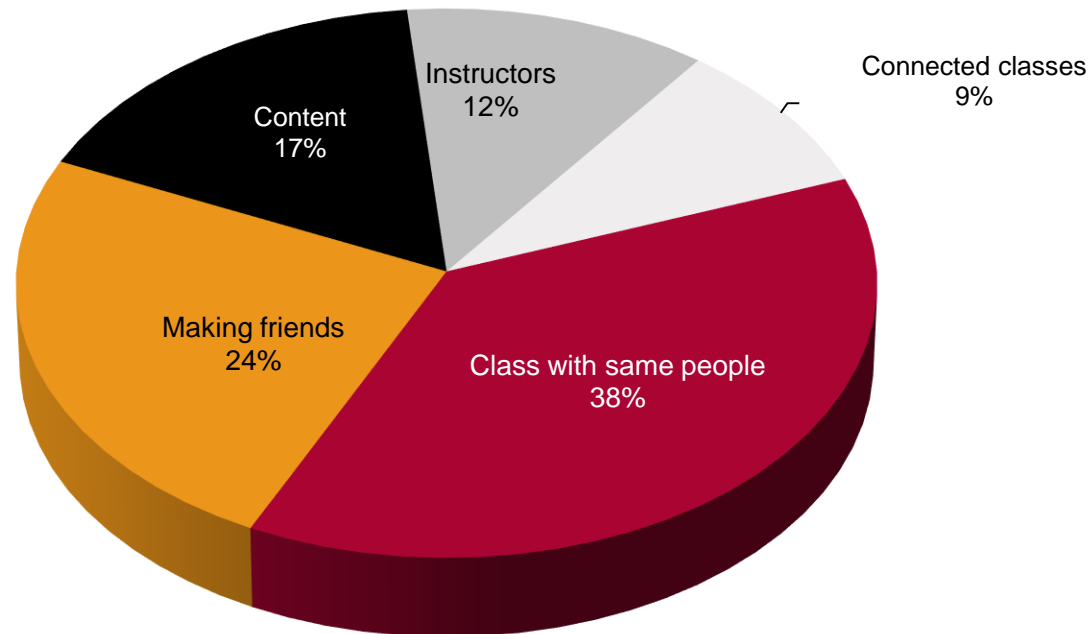
2018 TLC End-of-Course Questionnaire Results: Self-Reported Cognitive and Affective Learning Gains

TLC Students Indicating How Much Their Experience Helped In the Following Areas



Qualitative Assessment: Open-Ended Items Content Analyzed

Please Describe What You Liked Most About Your TLC Experience?



Students' Voices: Enhancing Community and Sense of Belonging

"I liked bonding with my peers the most. Having three classes together helped me feel more at home at IUPUI

"I like the friendships that I made the most and those will definitely last a lifetime."

"I liked forming close bonds with other people in the group that will most definitely be friendships that continue."

"How all classes were connected and we all had the same classes, it built community."



Students' Voices: Curricular Connections and Applied Learning Experiences

"I liked the way our professor connected real life problems, including their own, with the lectures to help us understand the issues that many experience in our world."

"I liked how my classes connected with each other."

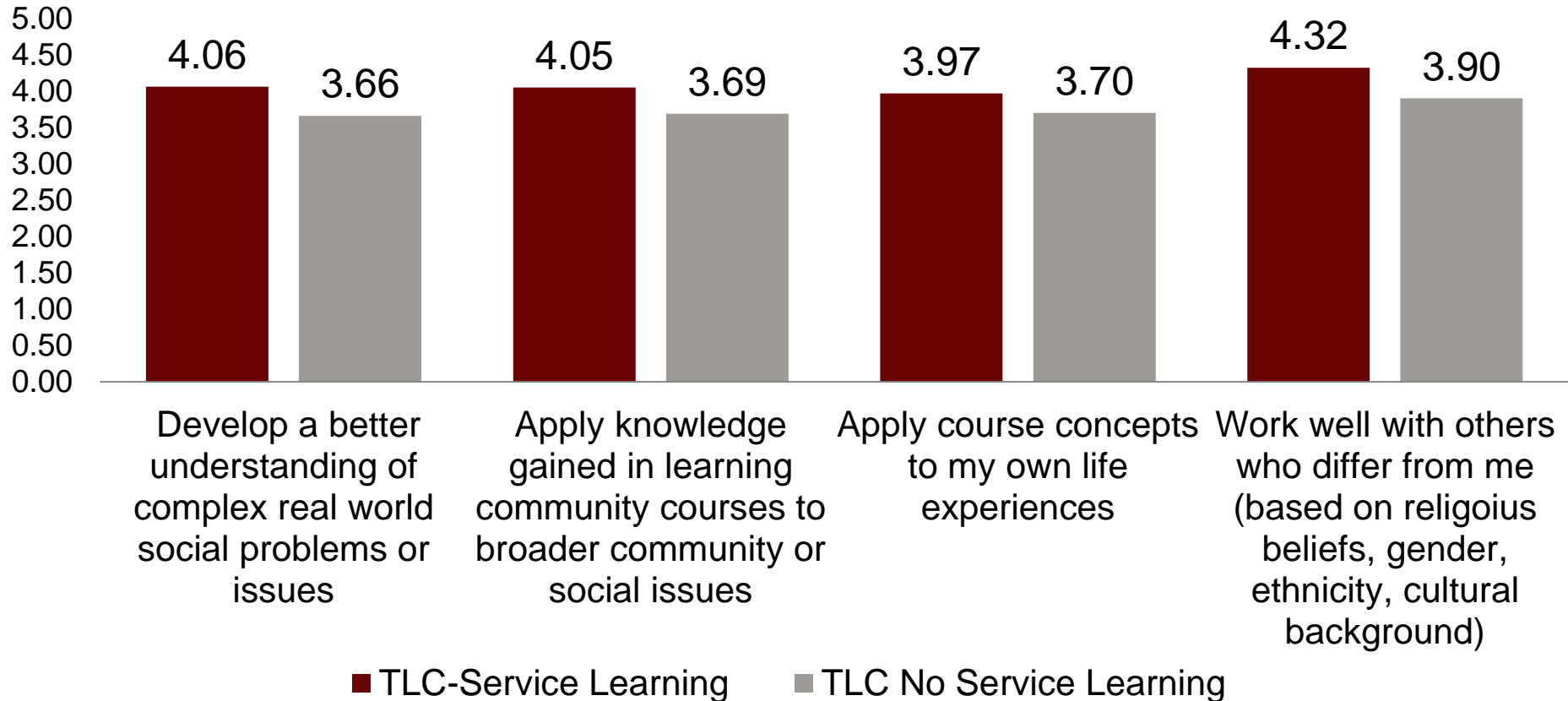
"Instructors being present at every session and interacting, communicating with, and being involved with students."

"It gave me a real life example of oppression and what social workers do, which helped solidify my want to become a social worker."



TLC-Service Learning: Civic Engagement Outcomes

Mean Scores



Note 1: All items significantly different based on independent samples t-test results.

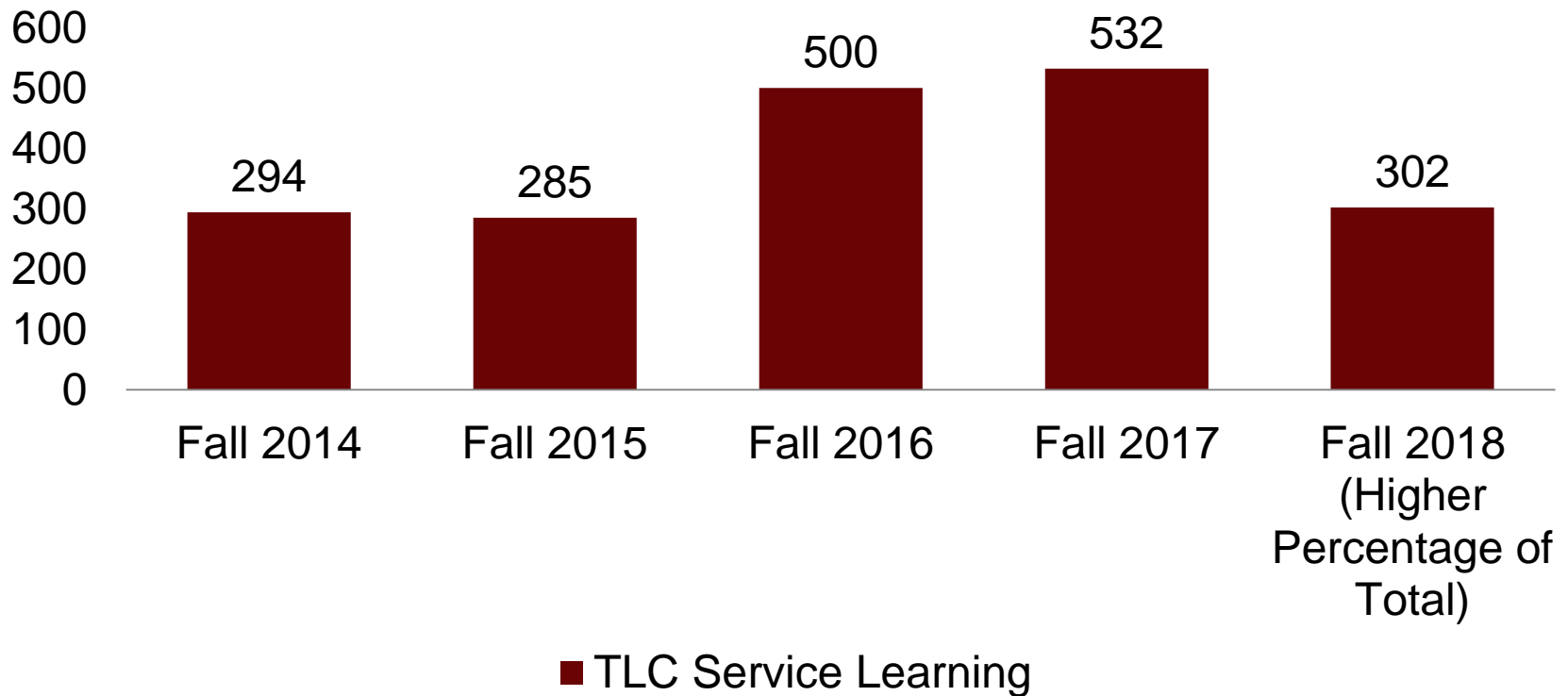
TLC-SL N=232, TLC No SL N=104

Note 2: Responses based on a 5 point Likert-Type scale where 1 = "Very Little", 2 = "Little", 3 = "Some", 4 = "Much", and 5 = "Very Much"



TLCs with Service Learning

Number of Student Participants



Checklist for Effective Assessment Plans

- Includes comprehensive assessment activities to determine if each major objective is attained (student learning outcomes, academic success, attitudes, behaviors, etc.)
- Proposes instruments that are valid, reliable, and aligned with intended student learning outcomes and proposed curricula (e.g., assessment and curricula are carefully aligned).
- Includes direct as well as indirect measures of student learning.
- Includes measures designed to assess cognitive, affective, and social outcomes.
- Includes a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods.
- Employs research designs with acceptable internal validity (e.g., research designs such as pre-post with appropriate comparison groups).
- Uses built-in points of contact with students.
- Contains summative and formative assessment components.
- Involves faculty in assessment planning.
- Contains sustainable assessment procedures.



Contact Information

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Contact me with questions or requests for information!

