A Workbook for Designing,
Building, and Sustaining Learning Communities

Name of Learning Community:

Semester LC is Being Offered:

Type of LC: **Linked**   **Integrated**

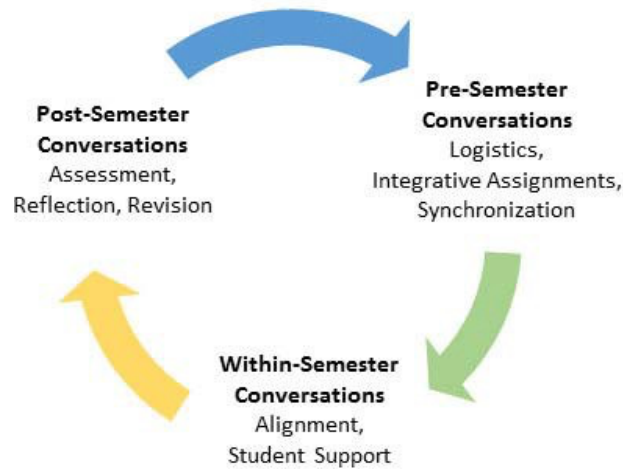**Participating Faculty**:

Start Date of LC Development: _____/_____/20_____

End Date of LC Development: _____/_____/20_____

(HR requires *specific* start and end dates)

NOTE: Worksheets #1 - #5, along with a copy of a shared syllabus or integrated assignment, must be submitted by the due date to qualify for the LC Developmental stipend. You are encouraged to use the remaining worksheets for your own future reflection and development.

Collaboration in Learning Community Teams:
A Cyclic Process

Post-Semester Conversations Assessment, Reflection, Revision

Pre-Semester Conversations Logistics, Integrative Assignments, Synchronization

Within-Semester Conversations Alignment, Student Support

Pre-Semester Conversations

Instructors of linked courses familiarize themselves with each other's student learning outcomes, curricula, and course materials, collaborate to identify a common issue of direct relevance to students' lives that the courses can address, and create at least one shared, integrative, assignment. Teams may also develop a shared syllabus or share a common course site.

Within-Semester Conversations

Regular meetings give instructors the opportunity to keep each other up-to-date, making sure their courses stay aligned and increasing integration and coherency in the LC. Regular meetings also give instructors the opportunity to discuss student progress, when warranted, making early intervention more likely.

Post-Semester Conversations

When the semester is over, teams assess their students' work and revise their activities and assignments to further strengthen them. Each team keeps an ongoing assessment narrative. Finally, teams are asked to review their collaboration.

Worksheet 1: Transparency and Relationship Building

Part One: Logistics of Collaboration:

1. How do you prefer to communicate?

Faculty Member	E/Mail	Phone	Face-to-Face	Other

2. How much time can you commit each week, before the semester begins, to plan the LC?

Faculty Member	Time I Can Commit

3. What are your meeting preferences during the semester?

Faculty Member	Frequency	Location	Time of Day

Part Two: Teaching, Learning, and Classroom Management

1. What is your dominant teaching perspective and how do your teaching methods align with it?

Faculty Member: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Faculty Member: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Faculty Member: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. How much reading and writing do you require of your students?

Faculty Member	

3. How do you assess student learning?

Faculty Member: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Faculty Member: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Faculty Member: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. How flexible are you concerning the sequence of course topics?

Faculty Member	

5. What do you see as the specific challenges of working with students in your course?

Faculty Member Name: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Faculty Member Name: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Faculty Member Name: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

6. What are your policies on:

a. Attendance and lateness?

Faculty Member	

b. Late work?

Faculty Member	

c. Food in the classroom?

Faculty Member	

d. Technology in the classroom?

Faculty Member	Phones	Laptops	Other

e. Other?

Faculty Member	

7. How might you invite students to have a voice in your classroom policies?

 Faculty Member: _____

_____

_____

_____

Faculty Member: _____

_____

_____

_____

Faculty Member: _____

_____

_____

_____

Worksheet 2: Creating Shared, Integrative Assignments[*]

1. Your Course Titles:

Faculty Member	Course Title

2. List the Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) for your Active Course Files:

Course #1	Course #2	Course #3

3. List any real-world problems (e.g., global warming) or issues (e.g., immigration) that you have or could explore in the context of your course:

Course #1	Course #2	Course #3

Consider your responses to (2) and (3) above in light of those of your partner(s).

4. Choose one SLO from each course that can be brought together in an assignment that allows students to demonstrate achievement of each outcome.

Course #1	Course #2	Course #3

5. Choose one real world problem or issue that could be explored across the learning community.

6. Using Appendix A, the *KCC Guide for Creating Integrative Assignments*, work with your LC partner(s) to design an assignment prompt that:

- Can yield an assignment that allows students to demonstrate achievement of each outcome
- Incorporates the selected real-world problem or issue
- Invites deep, sustained, integrative thinking

For example, in linking a Philosophy course in ethics with an introductory course in Business Administration, a SLO for the philosophy course might be "Students will be able to explain Kant's theory of morality" and a SLO for the Business course might be "Students will be able to identify five major management styles," and an issue that might be relevant to both is the Occupy Wall Street movement. The assignment might be: "Choose a corporation that was targeted by the Occupy Wall Street Movement. Discuss the management style of their CEO and evaluate it morally in terms of Kant's theory."

Worksheet 3: Working Backward: Selecting, Scaffolding, and Synchronizing

Consider your integrative assignment as developed through Worksheet 2.

1. Brainstorm and select specific readings, films, web sites, local resources, etc. that can help students connect them to the real-world problem or issue selected above.   _____

2. What skills and/or knowledge would your students require to complete the integrative assignment successfully?

Breaking down the skill set and knowledge base identified in (2), and incorporating the resources selected in (1) above, design two or three class activities and/or smaller assignments to help students acquire the necessary skills and knowledge. (This is especially helpful for students requiring developmental and ESL support.) Consider:

> **Collaborative learning** is a signature pedagogy of LCs. When students work collaboratively, they strengthen bonds with each other, participate in the social construction of knowledge, and actively engage and process.

> **Low stakes writing opportunities**, offered within and among courses of your LC, allow students opportunities to grapple informally with complex concepts. These need not be graded but should count in some way toward the final grade. Some possibilities for low-stakes writing are:

> - Short, informal writing assignments
> - In-class summaries of significant concepts or processes
> - Journals in which students respond personally (as well as analytically) to course material (textbooks, novels, observations, etc.)
> - Reading-log questions which accompany textbook reading assignments
> - In-class responses to lessons, which provide contexts for reflecting on learning
> - Short writing questions on exams

> For exploration of these concepts please consult the resources listed in Appendix D, especially Bean (1996), and Barkley, Major, & Cross (2004).

3. What collaborative activities and smaller assignments might support your integrative assignment?

4. What low-stakes writing assignments might support your integrative assignment?_____

5. How can these activities and smaller assignments be cumulatively sequenced, or scaffolded, so that students ultimately will be able to complete the integrative assignment? _____

6. Examining your course outlines side-by-side, where do you see areas where you might synchronize topics to maximize connections among your courses?

Be sure to reference the learning community on your syllabus and consider designing a shared syllabus that includes a common welcome message, the real-world problem or issue you selected, and your shared policies, resources, and assignments.

Worksheet 4: Grading: A Shared Responsibility

Consider the logistics of grading your integrative assignment.

1. What degrees of revision and drafting will you accept/require of your students? _____

2. Who will read what (e.g., first draft, second draft, final), and when? _____

Since integrative assignments are submitted for multiple courses, it is reasonable to have different expectations from the students for each class. For example, English instructors might grade on the thinking and the writing, while Gen Ed instructors need to evaluate whether the students mastered the disciplinary content of the course. The English instructor might not feel able to forgive the lack of organization and coherence and give the student a "C," while the Gen Ed instructor might recognize that the student does demonstrate competence and give the student a "B." However, a single, shared grade emphasizes the integrative nature of the assignment, and might be achieved with a shared rubric. You must determine what works best for you and your learning community team.

3. How will you grade the assignment (e.g., as a team, individually, cumulatively, etc.) and what criteria will you use? _____

Worksheet 5: Maintaining Collaboration

Intentionality supports integration. Things to do on a regular basis throughout the semester include:

- Discussing the learning community with your students and referring to it in writing, such as on the syllabus, assignments, course web site, etc.

- Visiting each other's classrooms, if possible, to reinforce the link in the students' minds

- Checking-in with your linking partners about what is happening in their courses: "What have you covered? What are you planning to cover next?

- Discussing student progress and problems. When appropriate, consult with student support services and make appropriate referrals to other college services for students with special needs, e.g. tutoring, testing, or counseling.

- Planning out-of-class experiences, if possible, to support integration and build stronger bonds between your team and your students.

Do you have other ideas for sustaining your LC during the semester?

Worksheet 6: Assessing Student Work for Evidence of Integrative Thinking

At the end of each semester, instructors are asked to look at some samples of student work for their shared assignment(s) and assess it for evidence of integrative thinking.

1. Select a few samples of student work and review these, guided by the *KCC Decision Tree for Assessing Integration & Revising Shared Assignments and Activities* (see Appendix B). What do you notice?

2. Once you have assessed student work, document your findings following the Ongoing Assessment Narrative template below. Each semester, update your Ongoing Assessment Narrative to "close the assessment loop."

Ongoing Assessment Narrative

Semester:

Assignment:

What we found using the decision tree:

Revisions we made (e.g., to assignment, scaffolding activities, materials, approaches, strategies, etc.):

Worksheet 7: Reflecting and Troubleshooting

In light of Worksheet 6 and your experiences in this learning community:

1. What aspects of your LC do you feel were most successful? _____

2. What aspects of your LC do you feel were least successful? _____

3. In what ways do you think your team communication can be strengthened?_____
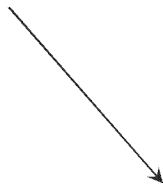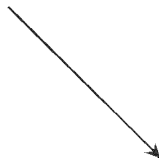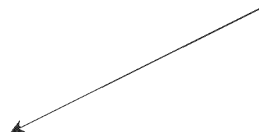
in subsequent drafts?
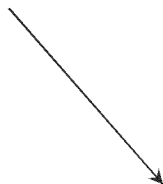
Consider how the assignment can maximize opportunities for integration.
- How can your prompt invite students to think creatively about the ways in which materials relate to each other and/or the topic or issue?

Consider scaffolded classroom activities that invite students to practice making meaningful connections on their own

Consider asking for multiple drafts to provide opportunities for the students to develop integration
- How can your feedback draw students' attention to missed opportunities for integration?
- Do you think it would be helpful to ask students to explain their responses to your feedback in subsequent drafts?

**Appendix B: KCC Decision Tree for Assessing Integration & Revising Shared Assignments and Activities**

achieved the objective(s) you've identified?

Yes   No
               [0] ⟶
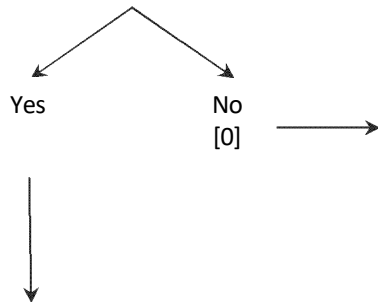
In your prompt, do you refer to course activities or materials that students can draw from?

Yes   No
             [1] ⟶
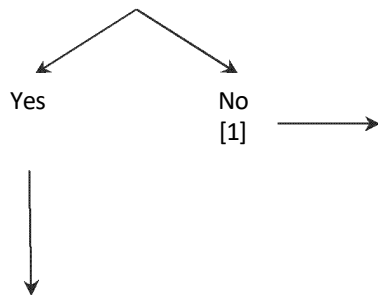
- Is the prompt asking students to draw content from all courses in a balanced way?

Yes   No
             [2] ⟶

No   Yes
[4]   [3] ⟶

subsequent drafts?
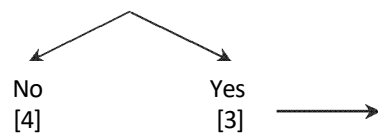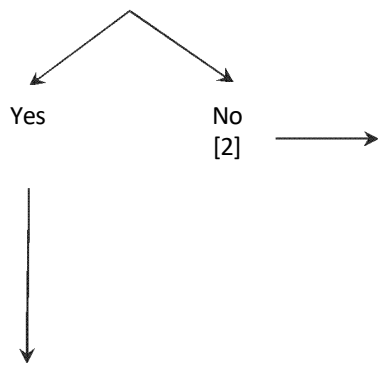
Appendix C: Best Practices Checklist

We recommend that you go through this checklist with your linking team during your pre-semester conversations, at the beginning of the semester, as a part of your within-semester conversations, and again during your post-semester conversations.

We've done this, and it works well for us.	We've done this, but it needs some development.	We haven't done this yet.	**Pre-Semester Conversations**
☐	☐	☐	Discuss logistics of collaboration, perspectives, and approaches to teaching and learning, and classroom management policies.
☐	☐	☐	Schedule regular communication among the linking team members using e-mail, the telephone, or, ideally, face-to-face meetings.
☐	☐	☐	Coordinate with all members of your team and supporting staff (e.g. librarians).
☐	☐	☐	Identify a real-world problem or issue for your learning community
☐	☐	☐	Develop an integrative assignment that will further the SLOs of the learning community, incorporate a library component to promote information literacy, and be read and graded by at least two professors in the LC.
☐	☐	☐	Agree upon shared resources (including readings, web sites, films, etc.) that will speak to your real-world problem or issue and foster integration.
☐	☐	☐	Identify the skills and knowledge required to complete the integrative assignment.
☐	☐	☐	Design scaffolding activities (including collaborative student work, low-stakes writing assignments, etc.) that will support the students' process of developing and completing a successful integrative assignment.
☐	☐	☐	Synchronize the topics in linked courses to maximize opportunities for students to make connections.
☐	☐	☐	Design a shared syllabus for your learning community that includes a common welcome message, your real-world problem or issue, and your shared policies, resources, and assignments.

We've done this, and it works well for [us].	We've done this, but it needs some development.	We haven't done this yet.	**Within-Semester Conversations**
☐	☐	☐	Discuss the learning community with your students and refer to it in writing, such as on the syllabus, assignments, course web site, etc.
☐	☐	☐	Visit each other's classrooms to reinforce the link in the students' minds.
☐	☐	☐	Check in with your linking partners about what is happening in their courses: "What have you covered? What are you planning to cover next?
☐	☐	☐	Discuss student progress and problems. When appropriate, consult with student support services and make appropriate referrals to other college services.
☐	☐	☐	Plan out-of-class experiences, if possible, to support integration and build stronger bonds between your team and your students.

We've done this, and it works well for [us].	We've done this, but it needs some development.	We haven't done this yet.	**Post-Semester Conversations**
☐	☐	☐	Select a few samples of student work to assess for evidence of integrative thinking.
☐	☐	☐	Revise your shared assignments and activities in light of your assessment.
☐	☐	☐	Document your findings in an Ongoing Assessment Narrative
☐	☐	☐	Update and archive your Ongoing Assessment Narrative and supporting documents.
☐	☐	☐	Reflect on the most and least successful aspects of your learning community.
☐	☐	☐	Close the loop by revisiting pre-semester planning to incorporate the findings of your assessment and reflection.

Appendix D: Resources

There are a number of resources for those interested in pedagogical practices associated with learning communities. A selection of these is included here.

Ambrose, S. A., Bridges, M. W., DiPietro, M., Lovett, M. C., Norman, M. K. (2010). *How learning works: Seven research-based principles for smart teaching.* San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Angelo, T. & Cross, P. (1993). *Classroom assessment techniques: A handbook for college teachers.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Babbitt, M. (2001). Making writing count in an ESL learning community. In *Academic Writing Programs*, Ed. I. Leki, 49-60. Alexandria, VA: TESOL

Babbitt, M. (2006). Strength in community: effectiveness of community in building college success. In *Volume I: Pedagogy, Programs, Curricula, and Assessment* of the *Perspectives on Community ESL* Series, Ed. M. Spaventa, 61-76. Alexandria, VA: TESOL

Barkley, E., Major, C.H., & Cross, P. (2004). *Collaborative learning techniques.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Bean, J. C. (1996). *Engaging Ideas: The professor's guide to integrating writing, critical thinking, and active learning in the classroom.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Bess, J. L. (2000). *Teaching alone, teaching together: Transforming the structure of teams for teaching,* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Bosworth, K., & Hamilton, S. J. (1994). *Collaborative learning: Underlying processes and effective techniques.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Darabi, R. L. (2006). Basic writers and learning communities. *Journal of Basic Writing 25*(1), 53-72.

Davis, B. G. (2009). *Tools for teaching,* Second Edition. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Dresdner, L. & Spiers, R. (2016). Teaching in combined programs. In L. C. Schmidt & J. Graziano (Eds.), *Building synergy for high-impact educational initiatives: First-year seminars and learning communities.* Columbia, SC: National Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition.

Duch, B. J., Groh, S. E., & Allen, D. E. (2001). *The power of problem-based learning*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

Fink, L. D. (2003). *Creating significant learning experiences*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Finkel, D. L. (2000). *Teaching with your mouth shut.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Boynton Cook Publishers.

Garland, L. & Kolkmeyer, K. (2011). A culture of conversation: Faculty talk as meaningful assessment of learning communities, *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, *38*(3), 231-243.

Graziano-King, J. & Kahn, G. (2008/9). Exploring voice as integration: A direction for assessing student work in learning communities with composition. *Journal of Learning Communities Research 3*(3), 74-88*.*

Greenberg, C. (2008). Developing adult ESL speech through a civic engagement learning community. *As We Speak, 5*(1). *TESOL Journals.* http://www.tesol.org/s_tesol/docs/13300/13213.html?nid=3162

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Kuh, G. D., Kinzie, J. Schuh, J., & Whitt, E. J. (2005). *Student success in college: Creating conditions that matter*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Laufgraben, J. L., & Tompkins, D. (2004). Pedagogy the builds community. In J. L. Laufgraben & N. S. Shapiro (Eds.), *Sustaining and improving learning communities* (pp .54-75*).* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

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Learning Communities Research and Practice http://washingtoncenter.evergreen.edu/lcrpjournal/

Levine, J. H. (1999). *Learning communities: New structures, new partnerships for Learning.* Columbia, SC: National Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition.

Michaelsen, L. K., Knight, A. B., & Fink, L. D. (2004). *Team-based learning: A transformative use of small groups in college teaching.* Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

Mlynarczyk, R. W., & Babbitt, M. (2002). The power of academic learning communities. *Journal of Basic Writing 21*(1), 71-89.

The National Resource Center for Learning Communities: Resources http://www.evergreen.edu/washingtoncenter/resources/index.html

Nilson, L. B. (2003). *Teaching at its best: A research-based resource for college instructors*. San Francisco, CA: Anker/Jossey-Bass.

Ouellette, M. L. (2005). *Teaching inclusively: Resources for course, department and institutional change in higher education.* Stillwater, OK: New Forums Press.

Pace, D., & Middendorf, J., (Eds.). (2004). *Decoding the disciplines: Helping students learn ways of disciplinary thinking*. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, no. 98. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Periodicals at Josey-Bass.

Parisi, H. & Graziano-King, J. (2011). Integrating best practices: Learning communities and the writing center. *Community College Enterprise, 17*(1), 22-38.

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