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Transformative Education: The University Learning Community at UTK

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University Studies Publications

Transformative Education: The University Learning Community at UTK*

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My Picture of the ULC

Different geometric shapes almost touching but not able to. It probably has dramatic and powerful colors. Done in such a way that even if you don't understand the picture-it makes you happy.

ULC Member

Twenty students and ten faculty are interspersed around a makeshift seminar table in a windowless room in the basement of a dormitory. Remnants of pizza and associated trappings are scattered about the table. The group is talking about a play they saw together recently about a young woman who deflected a sexual assault and trapped the assailant in her fireplace. Nearly everybody in the group contributes to the lively discussion, recounting their emotional reactions to the play and explaining and defending their views of issues the play raises. Those who do not participate spontaneously are drawn out by others in the group. The discussion is intense, both emotionally and intellectually, including references relating the play to themes in Robert Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart*; H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self*; Richard Adams, *Watership Down*; and theoretical discussions of professional ethics. Despite the intensity, there is also a great deal of humor. Some of it is "gallows humor," in response to the emotional intensity of the discussion; but much of it is playful, friendly banter. The predominant tone is that of a group of *good friends* enjoying being with each other and relishing their mutual exploration of ideas.

This is a typical "Case Studies" class in UTK's University Learning Community (ULC). What is perhaps

most remarkable about the scene is that an observer would be hard pressed to identify a discussion leader. Everybody addresses everybody else by first names. Nobody is standing at a lectern or sitting at the head of the table. Nobody is lecturing from prepared notes, and nobody is taking systematic notes. Most important, no one person *feels* the burden of being in charge, because everyone shares the responsibility for the course of the discussion. One of the students is as likely as anyone of the faculty to say: "Are there key themes in the play which we haven't dealt with yet?" or "Are there other authors we have read together who could speak to this point?" or "I think we have probed this issue far enough. I suggest that we turn our attention to" or "How does this point relate to what we were discussing last week about...?" In short, everyone is teaching and everyone is learning.

The fundamental goal of the ULC program was to create a community of learners. And the scene just described, as well as others like it, attests to our success in achieving this goal. In the following description, analysis, and evaluation of the University Learning Community, we hope to share the insights all participants gained in teaching/learning, insights we believe can be carried into our traditional classrooms. Interspersed with our discussion are comments from both faculty and students in the ULC drawn from individual and group written reactions.

HISTORY AND PURPOSES

The learning community concept originated a decade ago with philosophy professor Patrick Hill at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. Hill, now provost at Evergreen College, sought to revitalize undergraduate education by offering an antidote to three current wide-spread educational phenomena: 1) the mismatched expectations of some students and faculty--students seeking community and relevance in the classroom, faculty seeking professional, specialized development; 2) the atomized nature of the curriculum--the absence of meaningful relationships among courses; 3) the resulting privatization of the academic experience--education that is individualized, unshared, and unpublic (Hill, 1982). Hill's answer was Stony Brook's Federated Learning Community, where students and faculty function together as learners in a coherent, year-long curriculum exploring a significant theme. Hill thus anticipated the call for communities of learners and integrated curricula by such studies as the National Institute of Education's *Involvement in Learning* (1984), the Association of American College's *Integrity in the College Curriculum* (1985), and the Carnegie Foundation's *College: The Undergraduate Experience in America* (1986). In 1985-1986, UTK's community was one of eight in the country incorporating the Stony Brook model.

UTK's community was developed and administered by the University Studies Program, whose primary charge is to facilitate faculty and student development in interdisciplinary studies. Planning for the ULC began in 1983. The theme selected for the inaugural community, "Technology, Society, and the Common Good," had been the topic of an on-going University Studies Colloquy since 1979; several community faculty were members of that colloquy. Ultimately ten faculty from five colleges were involved in

implementing the program: Christine Collins, Health, Physical Education and Recreation (wellness Coordinator); Jo Lynn Cunningham, Child and Family Studies; Glenn Graber, Philosophy; Tom Hood, Sociology; Libby Jones, English/Women's Studies (master learner and community coordinator); Greg Reed, Civil Engineering; Charles Reynolds, Religious Studies; Bruce Robinson, Civil Engineering; Richard Strange, Forestry, Wildlife, and Fisheries; Jack Turner, Health, Physical Education, and Recreation (wellness coordinator).

Funded in its start-up year through the Division of Continuing ,Continuing Education, the Learning Community recruited rising sophomores in the spring of 1985. Recruitment was conducted through announcements in campus publications and through letters of nomination sent to approximately eight hundred students either nominated by faculty, taking University Studies or other interdisciplinary courses, or eligible for honors. Some eighty attended interest meetings with faculty and administrators; forty followed with individual advising sessions. The primary qualification for admission was motivation to participate; students were thus essentially self-selected. In fall 1985, twenty sophomores enrolled: eight men and twelve women, aged 16 to 27, representing six colleges and sixteen different majors. The average GPA at the time of application was 3.19. The curriculum, balanced between liberal arts and professional college courses and among the three divisions of humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences, was designed to further the interaction among diverse student and faculty groups. As we will show, UTK's community departed in significant ways from the Stony Brook model, departures which enhanced the achievement of community goals.

In forming a community of learners, including both faculty and students, the program facilitates three important types of learning:

Active learning. Focusing on the process as well as the product of learning, students and faculty share the responsibility for planning and realizing course goals.

Integrated learning. Exploring a significant theme from varied perspectives encourages learners to connect disciplines and approaches.

Personal learning. Academic learning occurs in a context of individual development, fostered by attention to wellness, social interaction, friend- ship, and personal discovery.

STRUCTURE

There are four basic program components:

1. *Established Courses:* exclusive sections of two regular courses;
2. *Case Studies Seminar:* a new course designed to integrate material from established courses; involves

all faculty, though primary responsibility is with current term's faculty;

3. *Master Learner*: a faculty member who attends classes with the students, co-teaches in Case Studies and provides feedback to faculty, and meets separately in a one-hour weekly session with students;

4. *Wellness Workshop*: bi-weekly session that complements academic learning by focusing attention on the health of the whole person.

Established Courses

The academic core of the program consists of six established courses (two per quarter), each taught in a special section with enrollment restricted to ULC students: This is a major difference from Stony Brook's program, where classes include community members but are open to all students. Our structure intensifies the development of the community.

Course materials and structure were those regularly used by ULC faculty; however, the active and integrative dynamics of the program prompted significant changes in course design and operation. The contributions of the master learner and other ULC faculty who sat in on classes also led to variations from the usual conduct of classes. Above all, students brought a critical, questioning intellect to their classes. In one of the natural science courses, for example, students subjected the textbook to critical analysis from the point of view of professional responsibility. They pointed out that the book was informed by unstated ideological assumptions which influenced the presentation of scientific data and conclusions as well as policy proposals. In spring quarter, one student noted a discrepancy between a definition given in one of the social sciences textbooks and that presented in lecture in the other course and followed up this discovery with library research to determine which was accurate.

Once I grasped a bit of Philosophy, I dug in all the way. I still can't believe I got an A on an essay test when I got furious and plainly said what I wanted to say.

Engineering. ...has made me well-learned in the ways of sludge, dioxin poisoning and other neat problems that we are going to be faced with from now until even after the nuclear holocaust.

After Human Development, I feel more secure in how I want to raise my own children.

Case Studies Course

Material from the two standard courses each quarter was brought into juxtaposition in a third course which was team-taught by the instructors of the standard courses, with participation by all the year's faculty. This team-development was another UTK innovation; in the Stony Brook model, this course is taught by the two master learners (faculty member and graduate student) alone. Again, Tennessee's community extended faculty involvement and development from two to ten.

community extended faculty involvement and development from two to ten.

These case studies courses employed a variety of approaches.

CRole play exercises included a 9-hour simulation "Power Game" (the Oshry Organizational Exercise) as well as smaller-scale exercises requiring students to assume each side in turn of various professional-client relationships.

CSeveral Harvard Business School Case Studies provided technical background for integrative discussions of value questions about technology, the natural environment, and social organizations.

CFilms describing environmental problems resulting from technology also provided a focus for discussion from all disciplines.

CIn the fall, the novel *Watership Down* was used to prompt discussion of social organization, leadership styles, and relationship with social and natural environment.

COne high point of each term was a field trip:

In the fall, the group went to a nature center in connection with the Conservation course.

In the winter, tours of water and waste water treatment plants brought the Environmental Engineering course down to the concrete level.

In the spring, a trip to the Highlander Center tied in with the emphasis on social organizations.

In each case, ethical, social, and technical issues were integrated into the discussion of what we observed. The dynamics of the trips also contributed to community-building, as did the store of shared experiences.

CThe entire group attended a three-day scholarly symposium held on campus focusing on the book *Habits of the Heart*, which the Professional Responsibility class had read together earlier. The students impressed the distinguished visiting speakers with both their eagerness to engage in intellectual dialogue and the thoughtfulness of their questions and comments.

CThe group attended the play *Extremities*, which led to the discussion sketched at the beginning of this report.

CThe spring quarter Case Studies course focused on intentional communities by reading accounts of several historical communal movements, as well as by reflecting on the process of development of community within the ULC throughout the year.

CThe most successful aspect of the Case Studies courses was the term-long triad projects, both for the learning they fostered and for their role in building community. Task forces of three or four students were assigned a research project the results of which were communicated both orally and in written form.

In the fall, each task force chose two vocational fields and developed a sociological analysis of their professional status by interviewing representative practitioners and surveying professional literature, training requirements, and aspects of the practice environment. Students chose biologists, lawyers, psychologists, school teachers, environmentalists, farmers, and funeral directors.

In the winter, exploration of the same vocational fields focused on analysis of ethical issues which typically arise for practitioners. The same representative practitioners interviewed in the fall were asked to respond to student-constructed case sketches of ethical dilemmas in their professional practice.

In the spring, each task force outlined the design for a utopian community, with provision for its social structure, mechanisms for meeting individual needs, and a planned relationship to the natural environment.

Two principles of organization of the Case Studies component of the program are especially worthy of note. First, the schedule of activities was not mapped out fully in advance. Some sessions were left to be planned in response to student suggestions or to themes that arose during the term. This fluidity was vividly illustrated by the successive revisions of the course schedule, sometimes five or more. This apparent disorganization was important both operationally and symbolically. Substantively it allowed for serendipitous inclusions, such as adding the play *Extremities*. Symbolically, multiple syllabus revisions demonstrated the faculty's willingness to respond to the group, thus establishing the principle of participatory learning and encouraging the students to express their needs.

Second, although one or two of the faculty typically took primary responsibility for structuring a given session of this course, all faculty were urged to attend and contribute to each session. Regular planning meetings were held in which most of the ten faculty took an active part. In the Case Studies Class, the faculty exhibited most dramatically their role as co-learners. Each topic chosen fell outside the professional expertise of at least some of the faculty present. They had to ask basic questions and adapt their usual methods of approach to relate to the exercise. As a result, the students who saw this going on were made less apprehensive about taking these steps themselves. We also developed exercises which drew upon expertise possessed by certain students, so that they could serve as the teachers and all the rest of us as their students.

What I like about the case studies class is that it is a huge block of time that is only loosely structured. It allows for change and for important, meaningful discussions to be continued.

[On the "power game"] I feel that it is beneficial to stand in someone else's shoes for a while in order to understand his position better.

I tend to boil and stew and only if I boil over do I say anything. During the discussion of Extremities, I realized I actually had something worthwhile to say and that others were interested.

The final paper represents a group effort in every way as far as all three of us walking through it (and tripping over it, and backing up and rebelling against it and...) every step of the way.

Master Learner

For the fourth credit hour in the case studies class, the master learner met with the students in the community for an hour each week throughout the academic year. This learning laboratory served several crucial functions.

Problem-solving. That conflicts arose among thirty individuals in a new, intensive program is not surprising. The master learner sessions provided a forum where problems, such as occasional friction between community members, difficulties with specific assignments, and discrepancies between expectations and outcomes, could be voiced and solutions attempted. Talking out the problems often resolved them; the master learner's role was to listen, mediate, suggest resources, and, in regular private meetings with the faculty, express students' collective concerns and negotiate solutions. As an example, disputes over multiple-choice test items in the Conservation class were lessened when the teacher allowed the master learner to preview the next exam and suggest some changes in wording.

Community-building. By providing an arena for the group discussion of the community experience as well as for the interaction of individuals, the Master Learner sessions increased the group's commitment to formation and to growth. As each participant's sense of group responsibility grew, students took leadership in eliciting response from all members. Students were often more successful than faculty had been in encouraging some members to participate actively in discussions and projects. Through master learning, students produced two ten-page newsletters, a full album of photographs, and organized three major social functions.

Learning-enhancement. Some Master Learner sessions focused on development of learning skills such as writing, test-taking, and making oral presentations. The value of these sessions was increased since the master learner was participating in the community classes and drew her subject matter from them. For example, the group analyzed three A-level papers from the Philosophy/Religious Studies class to understand what makes a paper good; the Environmental Engineering teacher, after assigning a formal oral report, reviewed and approved the master learner's materials on preparing and delivering oral presentations (and commented later that this group had produced the best set of oral reports he had ever had in the course). Another kind of learning enhancement occurred through extended integration of community courses/issues. To provide a context for problems many students were initially having with the Philosophy/Religious Studies course in contrast to the Conservation class, the master learner devoted a session to discussing William Perry's (1968,1981) scheme of cognitive and ethical development, distinguishing the relativistic level represented by Philosophy/Religious Studies from the dualistic level represented in the Conservation class. Guest lecturers on choosing a major, planning a career, and developing Knoxville's House Mountain, as well as attendance at a faculty Centripetal on disposal of nuclear waste and the Phi Beta Kappa Book-of- the-Quarter discussion of Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice*, provided other methods of extending community themes.

Reflecting and evaluating. By providing frequent opportunities for oral and written assessments, the

reflecting and evaluating. By providing frequent opportunities for oral and written assessments, the Master Learner sessions encouraged conscious individual and program evaluation. At the beginning of the year, community members were given notebooks to use as journals; some nearly filled these over the year. Freewriting in the Master Learner sessions plus assigned reflection essays confirmed the value of writing as a mode of learning and generated extensive materials to document individual and group growth.

We are constantly having to reflect! One can only reflect so much!

Wellness

The Wellness program, another UTK innovation, was designed as an optional, non-credit complement to the community curriculum. The program was organized into three areas:

Lifestyle choices and risks (fall quarter). Students and faculty completed individual health risk appraisals and physical assessments and discussed dimensions of wellness, cultural influence on lifestyle choices, and emotional wellness.

Individual goals (winter quarter). Participants set individual goals and coordinators put them in touch with available campus resources. For example, the eleven students who wanted to work on coping with stress were offered a special stress reduction program. Other students chose to address fitness, diet planning, and time management and organizational skills.

Personal and Social Wellness (spring quarter). Evening presentations offered information and a chance to discuss a variety of wellness issues, including nutrition, substance abuse, and sexuality .

Development of this component of the ULC was made possible in 1985-1986 through special funding from the Division of Continuing Education. Wellness coordinators were graduate students in the Division of Health and Safety, one of whom was an M.D.

GOVERNANCE & ADMINISTRATION

In designing, executing, and evaluating ULC activities, we evolved an informal system of individual leadership followed by group consensus. The primary faculty for each quarter were responsible for the final course plan for the Case Studies course, with the goal of drawing on each of the other faculty for at least one activity; the master learner called regular faculty meetings (every two to three weeks) and communicated with individual faculty in between, often in the regular classes. Students asked to be included in the faculty meetings and were welcomed; the two or three student volunteers for each meeting usually ensured comprehensive representation by polling the whole student group on their concerns and responses prior to the meeting.

Consensus also characterized the team-grading of group case studies projects, with the three or four primary faculty determining the final grade each quarter. Grading was first done individually; differences were negotiated. These discussions became another means for faculty development. In the established courses, the individual teacher set the standards, though often in consultation with the master learner.

OUTCOMES

The outcomes of an encompassing and extended program such as the University Learning Community are not readily measurable by standard instruments. A closure session in the Case Studies class each quarter encouraged verbal and written reflection. Following the community philosophy, these sessions were interactive, resulting in responses such as word-pictures of the ULC which were shared verbally; a group-composed community poem; and large autograph sheets (now adorning members' rooms and offices) of the group's individual responses to each member .

At the program's end, each member produced an extensive description/analysis of the year's experience. In the following discussion of major outcomes, we will draw heavily on these individual case studies of change and evaluation.

Student Reactions

Typical student responses from these 1000-3000 word essays follow each concept.

CFirst, students testified to the extent and visibility of individual change.

The U.L.C. has had a profound and permanent effect on my life.

The notebook/journal I kept was like the doorframe at home with pencil lines and dates on it. ...I have grown in some ways, and perhaps regressed in others, but I have been able to see the steps I have made.

It's hard to tell you what I have learned because I have taken a lot of the "stuff" I learned to heart, and I do not remember not ever knowing it.

CAAn important goal of the community, that of integrating learning, was clearly achieved.

This year has taught me, above all, to consider the whole of life: the me, the you, the corporation exec, the man on the street, the bag-lady, and everybody.

Individualism. Autonomy. Community. I'm learning so much. I feel like Benjamin Franklin--a

renaissance man.

CStudents confirmed that this learning experience was not the superficial acquisition of information, but the transformational development of understanding.

I never realized the difference between learning and understanding was so great. Learning by itself is something that cannot be used later; understanding allows one to draw and build upon the knowledge one gains, to use that knowledge. I now strive to understand, not to learn.

CAAt the center of the growth of understanding was the self.

I began to learn not only in the academic sense but also about myself...I found an inner self that I had denied all these years.

I have a better definition of who I am as an individual because I have been part of a community.

CIn the context of the community, self-knowledge expanded far beyond the individual. Connections extended first to community members, and then they moved outward.

We had each given up a portion of ourselves and put it on the collective table....Then we shared all the portions and gained something to keep from everyone else. Because everyone was part of everyone, to a certain extent, we all felt united; we were a community.

I have begun to value our society rather than feeling alienated from it....My "hero" is no longer the person that is completely independent with no need for anyone else. It is now the well-rounded interdepen~nt person.

CSuch encompassing learning demanded active involvement.

The open discussion around the big table is really a great way to learn. It's like taking an active part in my learning.

The community provided the opportunity to direct our own education. ..Who would have imagined that you could not only call your professors by their first names but that they would be learning from you?

CFFrom integrated, holistic, active learning came finally the empowermentofthe student.

I see immense changes in myself. Never would I have thought that my opinions were worth anyone's time. Now I realize that theyare just as important as the next's. I refuse to be walked on any longer. I am taking more control of my life.

We're like a team--a team learning experience--a team of friendship. Nobody in this university is going to push me around. Nobody in this world either.

That is another important lesson that I learned this year: not to feel intimidated by or awkward around faculty. When I compare regular classes to U.L.C. classes, I am amazed at the difference that knowing one is professor can make.

I will never take my education for granted as I have in the past, because the U.L.C. has shown me what the "top of the mountain" looks like.

An additional confirmation of the impact of the program was provided by an external reviewer of the University Studies program, with whom the entire student membership met in February, 1986. The reviewer wrote, "No one could fail to be impressed by the comments of students involved in...the Learning Community....All spoke to their progress in becoming engaged, self-confident learners. They have a broader vision of possible careers, a deeper sense of major issues in our society, and the social responsibility that accompanies the privilege of public higher education."

We are working now with the Washington Center for the Improvement of Quality in Undergraduate Education, located at Evergreen College, to develop additional assessment tools for future communities.

Faculty Reactions

The responses of community faculty reflect similar personal, intellectual, and professional development. Faculty spoke of the pleasure (and the risk) of connecting with colleagues across disciplinary lines.

The basic structure of the university...makes it difficult to....enjoy a more general intellectual life. The University Learning Community has helped fill that need by providing a structure to bring people together who are of very different backgrounds, who have different motivations, and who might not otherwise have the occasion to work together.

The ULC requires that I put some of my research on hold in order to fully participate and reap the benefit of the ULC experience. This is risky given the university emphasis on outstanding research, outstanding teaching, and outstanding public service--as long as you stay in your own back yard.

Connecting ideas within the classes has helped me experience more wholeness among the seemingly contradictory elements of my professional and personal life.

Faculty also described their pleasure (and exhaustion) in interacting with a responsive, demanding group of students.

The students are incredibly interesting, interested, motivated, and demanding; they won't settle for half

The students are incredibly interesting, interested, motivated, and demanding—they won't settle for half-efforts on anyone's part. I've worked harder than I thought I would. The classes are exhilarating .

I expected to encounter a group of bright and lively students and to get closer to them than I am able to in other classes. I underestimated how eager and active they would be and how much I would get to know and like them....The students wouldn't allow retreat to one's narrow area of expertise. They were genuinely eager to learn.

This mutual involvement resulted in regeneration that, though sometimes difficult, was ultimately positive.

My first reaction to stepping outside my area of expertise was primarily negative and fearful. But I found myself caught up in the enterprise of learning, and it stretched my mind and re-awakened my own native intellectual curiosity in a way I found wonderfully refreshing.

I have been forced to re-examine a course with which I was fairly content and have found it lacking. Alas, introspection is a difficult task....I...indeed learned a great deal this year.

Participating in the community has confirmed my sense that we teach best when we approach our students not as experts with answers, but as learners with questions....The demands of participating in the program have been repaid many times over in the learning, laughing, and caring I've shared with this group.

BEYOND THE COMMUNITY

Since the formal closure of the 1985-1986 Community in June 1986, members have demonstrated in numerous ways their commitment to each other and to the processes/ideals initiated.

Spreading the word. Students have eagerly volunteered to assist in recruiting students for future communities by speaking about their experience to prospective students and interested groups. Students have also taken leadership in collecting and organizing materials for an article in *Context*, UTK's faculty-staff newspaper. Libby Jones' essay, "Community Learning: A Case Study in Interdisciplinary Course Design," was published in the June, 1986, *Proceedings* of George Mason University's Fourth Annual Conference on Non-Traditional and Inter-disciplinary Programs. In October, 1986, eight faculty and three students presented a session titled "Technology, Society, and the Common Good: Curricular Design of an Interdisciplinary Learning Community" at *Interface '86: Tenth Annual Humanities and Technology Conference*, held in Atlanta.

Follow-Up Class. One strong indication of the success of the ULC program in building a community valued by its members was the enthusiastic reception of a proposal to bring the group together periodically during the 1986-1987 academic year. Once a month the group gathers for a discussion or

periodically during the 1986-1987 academic year. Once a month the group gathers for a discussion or group exercise like those used in the Case Studies course. The group has read *Miss Manners' Common Courtesy*, a section from Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time*, and Samuel Florman's *The Existential Pleasures of Engineering*; watched the film *The Year of Living Dangerously*; read aloud together the play *Our Town*; participated in a role-playing exercise dealing with hunting practices; revisited *Habits of the Heart* via a recent issue of *Soundings*; and played a variation on the ethics game *A Question of Scruples*.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The greatest strength of the ULC was clearly the strong community forged. Ten faculty and twenty students all became good friends, with a deep affection for each other and a strong sense of loyalty to their joint enterprise. An exercise in the Social Psychology class during spring quarter revealed the extent of these bonds. Where typically one or two individuals dominate a group, the Community's sociogram depicted a network of reciprocated bonds.

The recognition that this was a pioneering effort undoubtedly contributed to this spirit, but the primary force was the engagement of all as co-learners in an absorbing exploration. The feature of exclusive classes and of full faculty involvement in the Case Studies class contributed a great deal to developing these close ties between students and faculty.

The caliber of teachers and students enlisted in the program was another important source of its strength. These were the kind of faculty who could teach effectively in any setting and the kind of students who would learn in any setting. For this reason, it may be somewhat unfair to ascribe the results to the ULC setting. However, the outcomes described above leave little doubt that both students and faculty achieved a level of engagement and learning that they had not experienced in other settings.

Hill speaks of the importance in the learning community concept of giving people with related interests the time and space to release "the power of human association" (Hill, 1985). Simply creating the occasion for interchange is potent, especially to undergraduates and faculty at a large discipline-based, research university like UTK. As one student recalled at the end of fall quarter, the essence of the Community was contained in the moment when he looked around the table at a Case Studies session and realized that sitting there were twenty students and six professors. In the classroom interchange, the primary faculty became facilitators rather than dispensers of knowledge. That faculty were mediators rather than lecturers is clear from tabulation of speakers in one Case Studies discussion. Each of the seven faculty members spoke an average of 13 times; each of the fifteen students, an average of 11 times. The range of individual faculty contributions was 9 to 19; of individual student contributions, 0 to 34. Four students spoke more times than any of the faculty.

The path to this level of mutual active learning was not entirely smooth. Students put up strong resistance to taking responsibility for their own learning. This was most manifest in the Professional Responsibility

to taking responsibility for their own learning. This was most manifest in the Professional Responsibility course, where throughout the fall quarter the plaintive request to be told "the answer" to the thorny dilemmas being discussed was voiced again and again. When the two faculty team-teaching this course steadfastly refused to grant this request, and even staged some mini-debates between themselves to highlight their own intellectual disagreements on key issues, the students took on the challenge of thinking these issues through for themselves and gradually gained confidence in voicing their reasoning in group discussions. The result was many theoretical disagreements which led all parties to sharpen their thinking and refine their reasoning. A few personal conflicts also erupted, but we attempted to turn these into further occasions for ethical analysis and group decisions. Although this effort was not always totally successful, even our missteps were instructive.

The extraordinary faculty development which resulted from participation in the community was a result of a combination of factors. The small number of students and the year-long association with them facilitated getting to know them much better than is possible in conventional classes. The master learner served as broker for considerable feedback from students about teaching and testing styles, expectations for amount of work to accomplish, and the usefulness of various pieces of course material. In carrying out this role, the master learner is required to be quite a diplomat--conveying the information gently enough that one's ego is not unduly threatened and yet emphatically enough that the message is heard through the accretion of habit. The ultimate goal of these interventions is to enable students and faculty to communicate their concerns more fully. The integration of the wellness component into the ULC helped to solidify further the sense of community among the group, and it also demonstrated the multi-dimensional nature of the ideal educational process.

Faculty development could have been enhanced still further with greater sustained interaction. The program itself was very time-consuming, and faculty meetings--frequent and busy as they were--were not fully satisfactory for detailed coordination of integrative sessions. The ideal organization, we have come to believe, would be to enlist the faculty for a Learning Community a full year in advance and have them meet throughout the year to coordinate their courses. This would make it possible, for example, for faculty to attend all or part of each other's courses and gain a fuller, first-hand understanding of them before attempting to integrate them with courses of their own. The obvious drawback to this approach is that it increases still further the demands on an already over committed faculty, and thus might rob the ULC of some of the most desirable prospective teachers. Another, less demanding strategy to enhance coordination is one we have followed for each Learning Community at UTK: to develop the ULC in close cooperation with one of the on-going University Studies faculty colloquies. The Community reported on herein was associated with the colloquy on Technology, Society, and the Common Good. In 1986-1987, the ULC theme was "Human Passages," an outgrowth of the Aging and Society Colloquy. The theme proposed for 1987-1988 is "International Development," correlated with the interests of the Forum on International Development. Faculty who have worked together in colloquy activities have already identified common concerns and thus find it easier to translate these into course elements than faculty who have not worked together previously. We plan to continue to draw upon faculty colloquies in developing future University Learning Communities.

Assigning grades was not easy. The reductive nature of grades was even more clear than usual in dealing with this group. We soon found that alternative methods of evaluation needed to be developed, including extensive comments on individual class papers and conferences with individual students and working groups. Group projects received extensive written and verbal responses from faculty.

Since one goal of the program is to prompt integration across disciplines, considerable diversity among the courses is desirable. The 1985-1986 ULC included two courses each in humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences/technology. Half the courses were from the College of Liberal Arts, and one course each was from Agriculture, Engineering, and Human Ecology. One humanities course was paired with one "hard" sciences course in fall and winter. The two social sciences courses were paired in spring. The contrast between the humanities and sciences courses offered fall and winter quarters facilitated integrative learning. Ideally, it probably would have been better to separate the two social sciences courses and pair one with a humanities course and one with a natural sciences course, but faculty schedules made this arrangement impossible.

The ULC curriculum as a whole constituted a general education experience. Deans of the various colleges appreciated this and were very cooperative in approving substitutions by petition of ULC courses for general education requirements. However, a number of students were interested in applying, yet were prohibited by restrictive requirements in their majors. Further, three students who withdrew from the Community during the year found that Community courses interfered with progress in their majors. It would greatly facilitate recruitment and increased participation if the ULC package could be accepted as a matter of course as satisfying an equivalent number of credit hours worth of general education requirements in every college. It is clear that the thrust of the ULC satisfies the general goals of liberal learning and even contributes importantly to development within the major.

The question of the ideal size for the Community poses a classic dilemma. Although the small number of students in this group made it easier to form relationships among all parties, the instructional cost per student is well above the institutional average. If the group were allowed to grow to forty or fifty, the funding costs would be more readily justified, but the intimacy which allowed a close-knit community to form would be lost.

In sum, our experience suggests that the necessary ingredients for a successful learning community, and probably for all active, personal, integrative learning, are the presence of divergent disciplinary viewpoints; a responsiveness to legitimate student needs; a willingness to share personal insights and to take risks; a structure which provides time to share ideas and responses. When these were violated--when too much new material was introduced, when the emphasis was more on content than on the learning process, when lecture rather than discussion or interaction format was followed, when too few faculty attended, when faculty conserved their traditional power rather than empowering students--the interaction was less successful. At best, the active engagement of varied minds on significant issues has resulted in powerful

intellectual and personal growth for both faculty and students.

CONCLUSIONS: CREATING LEARNING COMMUNITIES IN OUR CLASSROOMS

The semester system, which increases the duration of our courses by fifty percent, will provide both opportunity and impetus for individual faculty efforts to develop community within the classroom. There will be more time--and more need--to get to know our students, to facilitate inter- action among them, and to ask them to participate actively in the work of the class. There will be more time to introduce and integrate diverse material and to encourage personal appropriation of course content and methods. Further, we can extend and apply the learning community focus on faculty development by seeking connections with colleagues across the campus and by designing courses that push us into somewhat unfamiliar territory. By then sharing with our students the processes by which we investigate and understand, we can realize individually the values of the learning community experience.

The Spirit of the Community speaks: "I am behind you. Speak openly about your demands to the wolves.... Warm the classroom environment with new perspectives, firing your fellow students with challenge. When the solitude becomes too threatening, light a flare, call on me, and I'll be there. ..

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