



THE UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA  
**GREENSBORO**

*Communication Studies*

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November 20, 2013

Chancellor Linda Brady:

This letter offers a strong endorsement of UNCG's Learning Communities as supported and directed through Undergraduate Studies. Allow me to explain.


I have been a faculty member in the Department of Communication Studies (CST) since 1997. Prior to 2011 I had a vague awareness of the concept of residential/learning communities at UNCG, but little understanding of their impact on the lives of students. In 2011, Ms. Laura Pipe was hired as UNCG's first Undergraduate Studies Learning Community Director and a major shift took place in my awareness and appreciation of the value of LCs to students, to their families, and to UNCG. Since 2011 Ms. Pipe and Undergraduate Studies has fulfilled a mission to actively, consistently and enthusiastically reach out and engage faculty, administrators and staff across disciplines through group and personal meetings, interactions and professional development programs and innovative Learning community partnerships. Ms. Pipe's deep knowledge and energy engages students to embrace the UNCG full experience from their first SOAR meeting. Her work and Undergraduate Studies provides a support system that has resulted in proven student retention success and has become a national model of excellence in LCs

This semester I have had the fortunate experience to co-teach in a freshman learning community lab (ISL). The students in our class are enrolled in Introduction to Communication (CST105-GRD/SI) and Introduction to Sociology (SOC101-GSB/SI). In this lab, students have been able to develop critical and interdisciplinary thinking skills relating to Civil Rights/Human Rights on a local and global level. As first semester freshmen, they have been challenged to, and are reaching success in going beyond collecting knowledge and information; they are learning to synthesize and communicate information effectively with the goal of applying it through service. The Learning Community has shifted the focus of "Teaching to Think" from an aspiration to a reality.

I also teach upper level courses in CST and serve as an advisor for over 300 Communication Studies majors. I am convinced the relationship I have been able to develop with our students in the LC will last well beyond this semester. I follow each student's progress whether he or she is succeeding or struggling in all their studies or dealing with other issues that affect their UNCG experience. The opportunity I have to meet with students collectively and individually has shifted from advising to ongoing mentorship. I am confident this relationship will result in student retention and commitment to UNCG while in the academy and commitment to UNCG in the longer term.

I firmly believe Ms. Pipe's position as Learning Community Director and the support she receives from Undergraduate Studies and you as Chancellor will have a deep and lasting impact on students and the financial, recruitment and retention success for UNCG.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patricia Fairfield-Artman".

Patricia Fairfield-Artman, Ph.D.

Senior Lecturer

Department of Communication Studies

[pfartman@uncg.edu](mailto:pfartman@uncg.edu)



Laura Pipe &lt;lpipes@uncg.edu&gt;

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## The Global Village

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**Susanne Rinner** <s\_rinner@uncg.edu>

Fri, Nov 22, 2013 at 8:25 AM

To: Steve Roberson &lt;shrobers@uncg.edu&gt;

Cc: Laura Pipe &lt;lpipes@uncg.edu&gt;, Amy Williamsen &lt;arwill25@uncg.edu&gt;

Dear Steve,

I am writing to you today as the faculty coordinator for the Global Village, one of several learning communities that have been developed since 2011. The semester is coming to a rapid end and my students just participated in their assessment session for the Global Village. Hence, I thought it might be an appropriate moment to provide some feedback from a faculty's perspective. I will keep my comments short and to the point, however, I would be happy to provide more detailed information.

When I accepted the invitation to serve as the faculty coordinator for the Global Village I was intrigued by this opportunity because UNCG's learning communities were developed as an academic endeavor. They were fully integrated into the curriculum (the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures developed an interdisciplinary lecture course as our contribution to the development of the Global Village). The Global Village bridges general education, UNCG's strategic mission, and the exploration of majors in a broader context. They enhance students' first-year experience through close collaboration with faculty and more advanced students who serve as peer facilitators for language learning in the Global Village. As the students' professor and faculty coordinator, I see my group of 26 students nearly every day. Through this close interaction, the Global Village contextualizes learning, scholarship, and service on campus and beyond. Hence, the theoretical foundation, the development and implementation, and our daily practice with respect to the Global Village could be considered a model for the Liberal Arts on a campus like ours that prides itself as a student-centered research-driven university.

Currently, I am in the process of making more visible the intricate connections between different units on campus. These connections are important to ensure the use of all resources on campus for the benefit of the students. In addition, I am working on connecting the Global Village explicitly to the QEP and to develop a plan of study that entails suggestions for students how to make the most out of their college experience at UNCG. This is still a very rough draft:

Progression for a participant in the Global Village:

1. year: Global Village/Explore different majors
2. year: Global Leadership Program/Continue to fulfill major requirements
3. year: One semester study abroad or other major international experience
4. year: Complete major requirements, conduct Undergraduate Research or Service Learning in a global context, complete GLP

Given the current environment, in particular rising tuition costs, our students and we, their professors and advisors, have to be ever more thoughtful and deliberate in our decisions regarding their studies. I believe the Global Village fulfills UNCG's mission to embrace our diverse learners by putting academics first and by integrating them with other aspects of life on campus. This weekend, at ACTFL, the largest national conference for language educators at all levels, I will host a session (together with Professor Carmen Sotomayor) on the Global Village as a model living-learning community. I would be happy to share the slides with you.

Please allow me to add that it is a pleasure to work with Laura Pipe and her team. I look forward to our continued success with this project.

Thank you for your time!

Have a great weekend!

Susanne

Susanne Rinner Ph.D.  
Associate Professor of German Studies  
Director of Undergraduate Studies in German  
Program Faculty, Women's and Gender Studies Program  
Coordinator, The living-learning community The Global Village  
**The Global Village is accepting applications for Spring 2014!**

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**Office Hours Fall 2013:**

MWF 9-9:45 AM and by appointment

Recent Publication: *The German Student Movement and the Literary Imagination. Transnational Memories of Protest and Dissent.*

<http://www.berghahnbooks.com/title.php?rowtag=RinnerGerman>

For more information about the German Program, please follow this link:

<http://www.uncg.edu/lc/languages/german/index.html>



THE UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA  
**GREENSBORO**

College of Arts and Sciences  
*Department of Interior Architecture*

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**Memorandum**

November 21, 2013

To: Dr. Steve Roberson  
Dean of Undergraduate Studies  
From: Tommy Lambeth ~~✶~~  
Associate Professor, FTLC Faculty Fellow  
Re: Learning Communities

I am writing to express my appreciation for the ongoing learning communities initiative at UNCG. Under the leadership of Laura Pipe, Director of Learning Communities, and her staff, the initiative has achieved rapid and notable success, spreading across disciplines and academic units in a way that has fostered success in student learning and collaboration among faculty.

I have been fortunate for the past two years to attend the National Learning Communities Conference to make presentations, and it was clear to me at these events that UNCG is a national leader in this area. Laura has assembled a team of faculty and staff that work together to not only produce results in student learning but also to enhance UNCG's reputation in the field.

I also have the wonderful opportunity to help direct the IARc Learning Community, and the support offered by the Office of Learning Communities has been invaluable to its success. The New York Times partnership, field trip support, and interdisciplinary collaboration have all advanced the effectiveness of the IARc Learning Community. One result of this support has been a new collaboration with the Art Department Learning Community. Just two weeks ago the two learning communities held a joint icebreaker session and are planning collaborative projects for the spring 2014 semester. None of this would have happened without the support of the Office of Learning Communities and its focus on getting faculty involved in the learning communities initiative.

I want to stress that one key to success of the learning communities is the academic bond that arises from the connected classes and cross-disciplinary relationships generated by involved faculty. The resulting collaboration among students, faculty, and staff is unlike any I have seen at UNCG in my twenty-eight years here. I implore you to continue support for learning communities as an academic initiative; it is vital to our culture and to our effectiveness as an educational institution.



THE UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA  
**GREENSBORO**

School of Education  
Department of Teacher Education and Higher Education  
410 School of Education Building  
1300 Spring Garden Street  
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(336) 334-3404

November 20, 2013

Dr. Linda Brady, Chancellor  
Dr. David Perrin, Provost  
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
Campus

Dear Chancellor Brady and Provost Perrin:

I am writing to recommend your continued support of the UNCG learning communities. I believe that the learning communities and their placement in the Division of Academic Affairs fit well with UNCG's mission and goals and benefit students and faculty alike.

I have been associated with learning communities at UNCG for five years. Currently I teach two courses: ISL101 in the fall and ISL104 in the spring. These courses are designed for students in the UNCG Teach learning community, composed of students who plan to become teachers. In addition to helping students become familiar with campus resources and develop skills critical for college success (e.g., study strategies, time management), these courses integrate content on educational issues. This semester, for example, students read and discussed in class readings dealing with school bullying and gender differences. The summer reading was covered in writing and speaking assignments. ISL101 is linked with SOC101 so I integrated sociological content of relevance to education; for example, how teachers interact effectively with students from different socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds.

The placement of learning communities within the Division of Academic Affairs has advantages. It encourages the incorporation of academic content into the courses, which I continually do. By the time students finish the second course, they are knowledgeable about many educational issues and confident in their ability to be successful in their ensuing teacher education programs, which they begin their sophomore year. Another advantage is that because of the emphasis on academics, more faculty members are inclined to become involved in learning communities. Students benefit as they are exposed to topics in their discipline by professors.

The cost to UNCG of most learning communities is minimal given the benefits to students. I have found the learning community staff to be exceptional. They are extremely helpful and support my emphasis on expanding our education offerings. In particular I commend Dr. John Sopper, Ms. Laura Pipe, and Ms. Shakima Clency.

Thank you again for your strong support for UNCG learning communities. I look forward to my continued involvement with UNCG Teach students and the staff in the Division of Academic Affairs.

Sincerely,

Dale H. Schunk  
Professor



THE UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA  
**GREENSBORO**

College of Arts and Sciences Advising Center  
CASA

25 Foust Building, UNCG  
PO Box 26170, Greensboro, NC 27402-6170  
336.334.4361 Phone 336.334.4665 Fax

November 21, 2013

Chancellor Brady  
c/o  
Office of Learning Communities  
138 McIver Building  
University of North Carolina Greensboro

Dear Chancellor Brady,

I would like to share with you my sincere appreciation of the excellent work being done by the Office of Learning Communities and encourage you to continue your support of this important program in its current location in Undergraduate Studies.

In my capacity of Director of the College of Arts & Sciences Advising Center, I carefully monitor General Education course availability during both the schedule construction phase and well into the student registration phase, so that I can provide the College Department Heads and their support teams about University- and College-wide enrollment patterns. By listening carefully to the feedback of CASA's approximately one thousand first year advisees and comparing that information to the data gleaned from available GEC/CAR seats, I work hard to provide Dean Johnston and the College Department Heads with pertinent, timely data so that they can be as responsive as possible to course demand pressures. Dean Johnston uses this information to guide funding decisions and to move ever-scarcer resources to problem points in the undergraduate curriculum.

For two years now, I have worked very closely with Ms. Pipe to coordinate the intersection of the Learning Communities with the course availability in the General Education Program. Ms. Pipe actively sought out our collaboration because she understood how important it was for her program to find the right courses for students interested in joining a learning communities but at the same time to respect and protect the academic and pedagogical integrity of the General Education Program for the entire student body. I have been immensely impressed with Ms. Pipe's true willingness to collaborate. She shares information related to potential course selection from the very earliest stages, seeking feedback on whether the courses under consideration might be academically appropriate for the students targeted for the learning community in question, and also whether choosing the course in question might have unintended consequences for the Departmental curriculum and or the larger General Education curriculum. She does not see these courses as commodities to be distributed efficiently among first year students, but rather as unique

opportunities for first-year students to learn. And she clearly understands that the opportunity to learn is most often realized when it is carefully matched to these students' academic, career, and life goals.

Ms. Pipe has fashioned the Learning Communities at UNCG as a serious introduction to scholarship. This is a significantly different approach from the extended orientation model of University Studies or Foundations for Learning, which have their origins in Student Affairs scholarship and practice. There is an important difference between helping a student see herself as a member of an academic community and make meaningful connections among the disciplines she is studying (between what she is learning in a Biology course and a Public Health course, for example), and introducing a student to available university resources or coaching her in time management strategies. While both approaches have value, the first can only take place in a program that is committed to engaging in collaborations with faculty. Ms. Pipe has worked tirelessly to engage faculty in designing and building communities that urge students to see themselves as scholars in ongoing academic conversations. And as much as I respect my colleagues across the broader university, this is clearly work that needs to stay anchored in Academic Affairs. I urge you to keep the Office of Learning Communities located in Undergraduate Studies, where Ms. Pipe has build a foundation of placing the students' identities as scholars at the heart of the program.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Nancy Gray Bucknall". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the left of the typed name.

Nancy Gray Bucknall  
Director, College of Arts & Sciences Advising Center  
Lecturer, Department of English





THE UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA

# GREENSBORO

Art Department

College of Arts and Sciences

PO Box 26170, Greensboro, NC 27402

November 20, 2013

Dear Chancellor Brady-

As 2013 winds to a close, I wanted to report how interesting and effective the implementation of the new Art Learning Community has been during its inaugural year. As Studio Foundations Coordinator in the Department of Art, I am charged with organizing all the first year Art majors and overseeing their activities within the recently instated, immersive yearlong curriculum. Students engage as cohorts in three simultaneous studio classes (3-d, 2-d, drawing) in addition to Art History forming a structure that promptly and thoroughly introduces them to the diverse faculty and facilities available in the Department of Art at UNCG.

While streamlining our curriculum has been beneficial in many ways, it is the addition of the Learning Community and its weekly class (ISL 101: Connection, Collaboration and Inquiry) that has proven to be the most vital evolution in our program. It is the lynchpin connecting and strengthening all the class activity among the cohorts and extending into a first year experience that promises to give our students many advantages. With the most crucial assistance of Laura Pipe and her staff in the Office of Learning Communities I have been able to move beyond a departmental orientation to citywide activity and regional field trips to provide our freshman with a more immediate professional purview than ever before. Convening as an inclusive group each week has allowed us to address basic transitional life skills such as time management, note taking and organizational competencies such as writing résumés. But my main ambition for this course was to balance the insular necessities of studio work with outward looking, contextual awareness. So, students met Tom Phillion, the president of Arts Greensboro to discuss the bigger picture of the economic impact of the Arts in our city and learned about projects initiated by Cecilia Thompson at Action Greensboro that reveal creative, "on-the-ground" opportunities for civic engagement and artistic outlet atypical of traditional approaches. Students' own sense of community was mirrored on a larger scale by hearing from John Ford who runs *Studioboro*, a collective workspace downtown that promotes collaboration and entrepreneurship across disciplines. Students actively participated in "First Friday" art events on South Elm Street and made their own Greensboro-based video work that was included in the recent *Creative Time Summit*, an international art event based in New York City.

My goal for Art students to feel a strong and immediate connection between their work on campus to the region beyond was, at every level, bolstered by events and field trips organized and enriched by the Office of Learning Communities. We



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Art Department  
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visited the International Civil Rights Museum; the Mint Museum in Charlotte and in the spring will travel to the Biltmore Estate on a 'reconnaissance mission' after which students will present their research to their peers in the Interior Architecture Learning Community to advance a growing partnership between the two on-campus groups. (This semester we held a lunchtime mixer to prepare them for a collaborative project happening next semester, a great success that had students on both sides asking when we could do it again.)

In the Art Learning Community, we have a diverse group of non-traditional students, residents and commuters and when Barbara Holland pointed out during her recent visit that students engaged in service learning do better and feel "more satisfied in their work", I saw an immediate connection to my class. Art is a field that deals with the balancing act between individual research and self-expression and the intelligent awareness of assorted audiences. The Office of Learning Communities has been instrumental this year in making the blend of educational process and real-world activities a most matter-of-fact experience for my students. The seamlessness between what is being taught in the studios and what is happening in the city around them, the instilled sense of community and mature accountability that comes from this model is producing a most incredible class of students.

Thank you for your initial support of this program. Admittedly, it is for selfish reasons that I want the best talent from the Art Department to stay local, but I strongly believe that if we continue to nurture the kind of activity that the Office of Learning Communities has helped enact this year, the Art Learning Community at UNCG will play a vital role in the continued cultural growth of Greensboro.

Sincerely,

Christopher Thomas  
AP Lecturer & Studio Foundations Coordinator  
Department of Art



# WASHINGTON CENTER

FOR IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

November 20, 2013

Dear Chancellor Brady,

We understand that the University of North Carolina system and the UNC-Greensboro campus are facing significant budget challenges. We appreciate that you and your team need to make tough decisions.

We are writing to support your innovative and courageous move to scale learning communities across the UNCG campus, and to encourage you to retain the learning community program within the Academic Division. The success of UNCG's program is remarkable, and so is the involvement of UNCG faculty—over fifty colleagues from forty-three departments.

Unless learning communities are perceived on a campus as an *academic* initiative, faculty won't see that they play a central role. When faculty do not play a central role in campus-wide initiatives, the culture of teaching and learning—specifically students' experiences of learning in the classroom—doesn't change. Your courage in bringing a learning community program to scale and involving faculty centrally in that effort is to be commended. We urge you to stay the course.

Few campuses have taken the bold step you have, and under your direction, the learning community program at UNCG has helped students thrive. As you probably know, the UNCG Learning Community Program will be featured in a panel presentation at AACU's Annual Conference in Washington DC. Along with an academic administrator from Kingsborough Community College, Laura Pipe will discuss the challenges of bringing a high impact practice to scale—a question on everyone's mind.

We want to underscore our appreciation of the tough choices you have made, and need to continue making. We also urge you to keep the UNCG Learning Community in the Academic Division, as an initiative designed to change students' experiences and the campus culture around teaching and learning.

Sincerely,

Emily Lardner and Gillies Malnarich  
Co-Directors, Washington Center for Improving Undergraduate Education  
at The Evergreen State College, Olympia, Washington