

### 3.3 IMPLEMENTATION TEAM

#### UNCG STRATEGIC PLAN 2009-2014 / GOAL 3: EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP

*UNCG will offer transformational undergraduate and graduate education in which students participate in high-impact experiences that develop integrative thinking and prepare collaborative, adaptable graduates with a broad spectrum of transferable skills for life, civic participation, and work in a global society*

#### GOAL 3.3

*UNCG will implement first-year learning communities for all first-time UNCG undergraduate students to encourage integration of learning across courses.*

#### CHANCELLOR'S MEMO DATED 4-5-10

*Team 3.3...should expand their focus on living and learning communities to include upper class students as well as first time freshmen. (Chancellor's Memo date 4-5-10)*

**Rationale:** Learning communities support access, persistence and academic excellence in ways that encourage collaboration, deepen integrated learning and prepare students with a broad spectrum of transferable skills for life, civic participation and work in a 21<sup>st</sup> century global society. As such, they support realization of key goals in the strategic areas of Access to Education and Student Success and Education and Leadership.

UNCG is committed to redefine the public research university for the 21<sup>st</sup> century as an inclusive, collaborative, and responsive institution making a difference in the lives of students and the communities it serves. In our *Vision for Teaching and Learning*, UNCG “embraces student learning as its highest priority” and commits to providing “exemplary learning environments”. Aligned with these commitments is our historic role of providing access and quality undergraduate education as well as service to the community. However, as the national literature makes clear, undergraduate education, particularly at research universities is under intense scrutiny. Many call for significant reform, (Boyer Commission Report, 1998). The concerns are well known.

Increased access means increased diversity among the undergraduate student population as “a nation goes to college”. Consequently, more students arrive on campus from populations that did not previously attend college. Even as they enrich the tapestry of our campuses, these diverse students are not always familiar with the culture and routine operations of higher education, and they may need assistance negotiating the complex world of a modern university, particularly in the critical first year, (Hill, 1985, Shapiro & Levine, 1999, 2004, Smith, MacGregor, Matthews and Gabelnick, 1990, 2004, AAC&U “Greater Expectations”, 2002 and “College Learning for the New Global Century”, 2007).

Also, faculty at research universities are becoming more specialized and focused on research, often resulting in a shift of attention and resources away from undergraduate education precisely at a time when students' needs for support, quality teaching and faculty contact and mentoring are increasing. Data show that one of the most important factors in student persistence and success is the number and variety of contacts with faculty both inside and outside of the classroom. However, quality time spent by faculty in the undergraduate classroom and socializing informally with undergraduates is being reduced, further contributing to a gap between faculty and student expectations (Hill, 1985).

At the same time, Student Affairs professionals are being called to reconsider the impact their work with students has on student learning, and in fact have identified student learning outcomes that stem from the co-curriculum in partnership with the curriculum. (*Learning Reconsidered 2*, ACPA/ACUHO-I, ACUI, NACA, NACADA, NASPA and NIRSA, 2006).

Furthermore, education in the fundamental skills and habits of mind and heart traditionally associated with General Education is in need of support and reform. Many students focus on a narrow understanding of their education so that increasing numbers express confusion about the purpose of General Education requirements outside the major and are unable to effectively connect and integrate learning across courses and disciplines in order to develop and apply creative solutions to novel problems. (AAC&U "Greater Expectations", 2002, "College Learning for the New Global Century", 2007, "Integrated Learning: Opportunities to Connect", 2004 and "Integrative Learning: Mapping the Terrain", 2004). However, in a changing and globalizing environment, both successful workers and democratic citizens must comprehend and respond to ever more complex issues, requiring the ability to consider multiple perspectives and sources of insight, and the ability to effectively synthesize and apply those insights and sources. Our students can expect to hold many different jobs over the course of their careers; some that will not yet exist when they graduate. In this environment, employers are looking to hire professionals who are able to think critically, learn continuously, apply knowledge to real world practice in novel ways and communicate effectively to diverse audiences. In short, flexibility, creative problem-solving, communication, team work, intercultural understanding and the ability to synthesize information, apply knowledge and adapt to changing circumstances are keys to success. Yet, acquiring these qualities and skills requires a transformative education that turns knowledge users into knowledge creators and reinforces and encourages collaboration, active learning, applied knowledge and multidisciplinary integration. Learning communities are an exemplary high impact educational practice that can effectively organize and deliver this kind of learning, ("Integrated Learning: Opportunities to Connect", 2004, Integrative Learning: Mapping the Terrain, 2004 and "High Impact Educational Practices: What they are, Who has them and Why they Matter", 2008)

How do learning communities help? By enrolling small cohorts of students in clusters of common courses and designing collaborative assignments and hands-on co-curricular activities that intentionally link the content of those courses, learning communities make clear connections between disciplines, link curricular and co-curricular learning and provide a context for

implementing more collaborative, active, hands-on, project and problem based teaching and learning that is rarely found in a large lecture section or single course. Learning communities also bring together faculty and staff from different disciplines as they share the work and joys of teaching and mentoring the same cohort of students, thereby drawing more faculty and staff into community and collaboration with colleagues outside of their narrow research field or co-curricular unit. In short, learning communities build intellectual community, and thereby support a sense of belonging while also deepening learning.

Moreover, national research and our own campus data show that students in learning communities often persist and graduate in higher numbers than similarly situated students who are not in learning communities. They also attain higher levels of academic achievement, experience a greater variety and number of contacts with faculty and staff, participate in campus life and activities outside the classroom in higher numbers, report a stronger sense of belonging and a more positive regard for their home institutions, (National Study of Living Learning Programs, 2004 and 2007).

In these observations, the 3.3 Team finds common cause with the 1.3 Implementation Team charged with meeting our retention, persistence and graduation targets, the 1.5 Implementation Team charged with attracting highly qualified students to UNCG and the 3.6 Implementation Team charged with enhancing connections between curricular and co-curricular learning. A well planned and coordinated expansion of learning communities provides an especially focused and rich way to address goals in all of these important areas of access, student success, and education and leadership. It also offers an exciting opportunity to significantly enhance our undergraduate program and lift our profile as a 21<sup>st</sup> century institution of higher learning. For these reasons, the 3.3 Team finds the strategic rationale for expanding learning communities to be clear even as the resource challenges in the current economic context are significant.

Therefore, the 3.3 Team seeks to outline a path forward that is mindful of both the opportunities and costs of this ambitious strategic goal. Some learning community models are likely to be more effective than others in promoting student persistence and 21<sup>st</sup> century integrated learning at UNCG given our history and institutional make-up. At the same time, some of the most effective models also require more resources than others, suggesting a need to balance effectiveness and cost. We also recognize that strategic opportunities exist for a campus wide collaboration that builds upon, enhances and synergizes existing programs in coordination with learning communities that if realized, promises to reduce costs and improve effectiveness and quality. An effective plan, therefore, will require careful consideration of appropriate models and best practices, seek strategic coordination with and among existing programs and staff, and strive for a careful use of resources. These considerations inform the recommendations that follow.

### **Annual Activities:**

- By fall 2014 UNCG will provide learning communities and living learning communities that integrate learning for all first year students and all upper class students who seek them.
- In November 2009 the 3.3 Implementation Committee was activated and charged with the first year learning community initiative.
- In spring 2010 the 3.3 charge was expanded to include upper class students.
- In spring of 2010 members of 3.3 participated with HRL staff, Student Affairs staff, Facilities staff and contracted architects in design meetings for the new residence halls and made recommendations for including academic and LLC space in the new construction.
- In spring 2010 a definition of a UNCG learning community was crafted and a Request for Proposals (RFP) was developed by the 3.3 Team and presented to Deans Council.
- In May 2010, Deans Council endorsed the RFP and initiated dissemination to their unit faculty during summer 2010.
- In summer 2010 a team of 8 UNCG faculty, administrators and staff (including 5 members from the 3.3 Team) participated in the National Summer Institute on Learning Communities (NSILC) held at Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington, June 26-July 1, 2010. The NSILC team developed an Action Plan to implement a learning community program that promotes integration of learning across courses.
- In summer and fall 2010 The NSILC Action Plan was reviewed and revised by the 3.3 Team and submitted to the Provost and Chancellor in September 2010 with recommendations to establish a Learning Communities Office and a Director of Learning Communities position in Undergraduate Studies.
- In fall 2010, 3 subcommittees of the 3.3 Team began working with faculty to develop upper class living and learning communities (LLCs) for new residence halls being built under the Strategic Housing Plan 2020. Each subcommittee focused on fostering LLCs for one of the planned construction or renovation projects (the new building at Kenilworth and Spring Garden, the Quad renovation and the “New Neighborhood”).
- In fall 2010 a subcommittee of 3.3 began reviewing LC and LLC proposals. Successful proposals will be advanced to the Provost and Chancellor for funding consideration.
- In October 2010 UNCG authorized creation of a Director of Learning Communities position in Undergraduate Studies and a search was begun in early November, 2010. The position is expected to be filled by spring 2011.
- In fall 2010 Undergraduate Studies developed a new Learning Community Course (LCC) designation to be used for course “shells” in the various GEC areas and Undergraduate Research. Approval for the UCC was obtained in November, 2010.

- In fall 2010 work began on a web site for the new LCs and LLCs housed on the Undergraduate Studies web site where information about existing residential college programs is also found.
- In fall 2010 the Dean of Undergraduate Studies will solicit participation on the LC Advisory Council from a wide spectrum of relevant campus units. The Advisory Council will inform and support the work of the Director of Learning Communities.
- In AY 2010-2011 UNCG will offer webinars and faculty / staff workshops, luncheons and retreats to encourage and support the development of new learning community proposals.
- In spring 2011 the Director of Learning Communities will work with faculty and staff to develop and implement learning communities for those populations of first year students who are deemed to be “at risk”.
- In spring 2011 the LC Director will coordinate with Admissions, Advising Council, and the Office of New Student and Spartan Family Programs to market and promote new LCs and LLCs, and recruit, advise and register students (e.g. during fall and spring Admission’s events, Academic Advantage and SOAR).
- In spring, 2011, the LC Director will expand and enhance the LC web site and web presence.
- In summer 2011, the LC Director will work with the Registrar’s Office, Academic Advising and SOAR staff to assure the timely registration of students in their LC preferences.
- In fall 2011 the first new LCs and LLCs will launch.
- In fall 2011 the LC Director will collaborate with the Office of Planning and Assessment, Institutional Research and the Student Learning Excellence Committee to develop assessment instruments and strategies for assessing learning in LC and LLCs, especially integrative learning.
- In fall 2011 the LC Director will collect student work product for assessment purposes.
- In fall 2011, under the leadership of the Dean of Undergraduate Studies and guided by the Strategic Plan and the recommendations of the 3.3 Team’s report, the Director of LCs will consult and collaborate with the LC Advisory Council and other campus partners to develop a more detailed long range plan to incrementally increase the number of first year students enrolled in learning communities so as to realize the improvements in retention and student learning envisioned by the Strategic Plan.
- In spring 2012 the LC Director will analyze and evaluate student learning in the LCs and LLCs and report results. Outcomes will be used to further refine and elaborate an LC implementation plan to incrementally increase first year student enrollment in LCs over the period of the Strategic Plan.

**Metrics:**

Each year until fall 2014 UNCG will incrementally increase the enrollment of first year students in LCs and LLCs and upper class students in LCs and LLCs, and will incrementally develop a level of capacity that allows for all first year students (approximately 3500) to be enrolled and all upper class student who wish to do so as well. Possible benchmarks are:

Fall 2011—15% of all first year UNCG undergraduates (approximately 525 students)

Fall 2012—30% of all first year UNCG undergraduates (approximately 1050 students)

Fall 2013—60% of all first year UNCG undergraduates (approximately 2100 students)

Fall 2014—100% of all first year UNCG undergraduates (approximately 3500 students)

**Resources:** The requisite resources and recommendations for implementing this plan will be detailed in the balance of this report.

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\*These members contributed to the Team's work, but stepped down do to other duties prior to completion of the final report.

DRAFT

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXPANDING LEARNING COMMUNITITES AND LIVING-LEARNING COMMUNITIES**

Full realization of Strategic Plan Goal 3.3 will require UNCG to provide learning communities for approximately 3500 first year students and an undetermined number of upper class students. Moreover, additional capacity will be needed if overall enrollments continue to rise as expected. Currently, UNCG has two LLCs (Ashby and Grogan) and five special interest housing communities (SIHC) that are predominately co-curricular (though the “Make a Difference House” might be counted a hybrid model). Taken together, these programs enroll approximately 350 freshmen and 125 upper class students. Additionally, Lloyd International Honors College opened a residential option with in-house learning opportunities for its members in fall 2010 with approximately 190 members (a mix of first year and upper class students). Given current numbers, a significant increase in LC and LLC enrollment is envisioned. Also, only some of the existing programs (Ashby, Grogan, Honors and MADH) are structured to implement the integration of learning called for by the Strategic Plan which the 3.3 Team has determined to minimally require 2 common, concurrent courses with at least 2 integrative assignments and 1 common co-curricular learning activity. Therefore, significant attention to increasing faculty involvement, developing courses and assignments that deepen integrative learning, and to new funding and other resources is needed to more fully align the existing programs with the Strategic vision and to propogate new LCs and LLCs with an emphasis on integrative learning.

Previously, the Academic Affairs/Students Affairs Transition Committee and the 1.3 Implementation Team Report recommended that an LC/LLC Office be established in Undergraduate Studies and that the SIHC programs be re-assigned to that office and enhanced to provide an academic core of integrative learning.

Additionally, the Action Plan developed by the UNCG Team at the 2010 National Summer Institute on Learning Communities also recommends the establishment of an LC Office in Undergraduate Studies with sufficient resources. It also calls for the creation of a Director of Learning Communities position to lead that office under the supervision of the Dean of Undergraduate Studies. The Action Plan, with input from the 3.3 Team, was submitted to the Provost and Chancellor in September 2010.

The 3.3 Team concurs with the decision to begin a search for a Director of Learning Communities in fall 2010 under the Dean of Undergraduate Studies, and recommends that the Director of Learning Communities be assigned responsibility to further develop and implement the expansion plan outlined in the balance of this report and envisioned in the list of Annual Activities previously addressed.



We also endorse the following additional recommendations, some of which are also presented in the NSILC Action Plan and in the “Annual Activities” portion of this report.

1. Create an Advisory Council with wide campus representation to advise the Director of Learning Communities and the LC Office.
2. Under the leadership of the Dean of Undergraduate Studies, the Director of Learning Communities and the LC Office will encourage faculty, staff and academic units to develop learning communities and living-learning communities, and they will assist those who are developing proposals with both conceptual development and logistical and administrative support.
3. The LC Advisory Council chaired by the Director of Learning Communities will review and approve proposals as consonant with the Strategic Plan.
4. To support student retention and persistence, and in collaboration with academic units and student support and student success efforts in Undergraduate Studies and Student Affairs units across campus, the Director of Learning Communities and the LC Office will take steps to directly plan and implement first year LCs and LLCs for those student populations identified as especially at risk.
5. The LC Office will coordinate with the University Teaching and Learning Center and faculty and staff across campus with relevant expertise to offer appropriate faculty and staff professional development in support of high impact pedagogy and effective teaching in LCs and LLCs.
6. The Director of Learning Communities will coordinate with Admissions, the Office of New Student and Spartan Family Programs, Academic Advising, the Registrar’s Office and Housing and Residence Life (through advertising on its web site) on efforts to recruit, advise and enroll students in appropriate learning community offerings, especially first year students.
7. In order to assure a smooth orientation and transition for first year students admitted to UNCG, consideration should be given to formally incorporating LC selection into the new student enrollment process.
8. The Director of Learning Communities will coordinate with the Office of Planning and Assessment, Institutional Research and the Student Learning Enhancement Committee to develop, implement and administer an effective and on-going assessment plan for student learning in LCs (especially integrated learning) that closes the loop and reports results.

9. UNCG will develop LCs and LLCs that are linked to the curriculum through GEC and major requirements that students must ordinarily fulfill such that the LC experiences offered at UNCG are “in the path” of students’ normal progress toward a degree. In the view of the 3.3 Team, to be practicable for students and faculty as well as cost effective for UNCG as a whole, in most cases, and for most students, participation in an LC or LLC cannot be an “elective” or “add-on” experience nor involve the introduction and approval of significant numbers of new and specialized disciplinary or GEC courses taught only to the students in a single LC cohort. While some new courses specific to individual learning communities will no doubt be needed and justified in some circumstances, it is anticipated and recommended by the 3.3 Team that new LCs be built around existing courses and requirements as much as possible, supplemented with appropriate integrated learning assignments.

To use existing resources effectively, a first year learning community program of the scope envisioned by the Strategic Plan, will require careful planning and significant collaboration among the LC Office, academic units, the Gen Ed Council, senior leadership and others to assure that sufficient courses and instructors are available for inclusion in LCs and LLCs. This effort cannot be the sole responsibility of the LC Office; it requires a campus wide commitment and sustained effort on everyone’s part.

**For example, UNCG could consider making participation in a first year LC mandatory for all or some significant portion of first year students, or make integrated learning a part of GEC and able to be fulfilled through participation in an LC, or participation in an LC might be recorded in some way on the UNCG transcript as an enrichment experience. In any case, the key point is that students, faculty, advisors and other staff will more likely value and more easily support LCs that fulfill requirements and contribute to academic progress, and for this to occur, attention must be given to GEC and other curricular requirements.**

10. Even with committed and sustained collaboration, it is doubtful that sufficient capacity to accommodate all first year students in integrated LC or LLC courses will be achieved without additional resources in the form of funding for dedicated and centralized instructors and staff housed in Undergraduate Studies for LC and LLC purposes. In this regard, our recommendations align with the recommendations and observations of the 1.3 Team Report. The 1.3 Team emphasized the central importance of faculty involvement in learning communities in order for them to be successful as learning communities. In addition, the 1.3 Report and the NSILC Action Plan correctly underscore the need for faculty teaching in LCs and LLCs who are especially dedicated to this endeavor and who possess skills in high impact, inquiry based, interactive, problem and project based integrative learning that is effective with today’s college students. In this regard, we see

the same challenges with respect to recruiting sufficient numbers of faculty were we to rely only on existing tenure stream faculty in the academic units. Therefore, serious consideration should be given to providing additional funding for LC and LLC faculty and staff that might include:

- Direct-Hire Adjuncts
- Replacement Adjuncts
- Joint Appointments
- Academic Professionals
- Post-doc s
- Graduate TAs

11. As noted above, involvement in learning communities by Student Affairs staff is also essential to their overall success. One of the singular opportunities associated with the planned expansion of learning communities at UNCG is the opportunity to connect and mutually enhance curricular and co-curricular learning. Integrating learning across curriculum and co-curriculum is one dimension of integrative learning. Here the 3.3 Team finds common cause with the 3.6 Implementation Team tasked with enhancing the links between curricular and co-curricular learning. We envision LCs and LLCs that engage students in meaningfully integrated learning inside and outside of the classroom. Therefore, consideration should also be given to the resources and funding needed to support the work of Student Affairs professionals in learning communities.

12. Building on the previous recommendations that LCs be meaningfully linked to the existing curricular pathways and requirements for a degree as well as to the co-curriculum, the 3.3 Team further recommends that first year LCs be coordinated with a comprehensive, year-long structured and coherent first year program that is informed by student development theory as well as disciplinary topics and themes, and that continues for at least the first and second semesters. Elements of such an integrated and structured first year program that could be incorporated into first year LCs might include initial welcome, community building and new student orientation activities, information about campus resources, academic and life skills development, major and career reflection and planning, leadership development, and higher order academic activities such as integrated and multidisciplinary learning, undergraduate research, hands-on and active problem solving and project based learning, service learning, community engagement, team work and work on academic writing and effective speaking/presenting. Comprehensive, consistent and developmentally sequenced programming is best able to provide the enhancements to student learning and support of student retention and persistence sought by the Strategic Plan. And many departments in the Division of Student Affairs will be key players in the first year program along with academic support units and discipline specific faculty, all who bring resources and opportunities for first year students to build critical student success skills.

13. However, one potential challenge to the comprehensive and co-coordinated approach we recommend in this report is the fact that many different programs housed in different units across campus have been implemented, sometimes making collaboration and coordination difficult and risking some duplication of services. Therefore, in order to maximize the potential of the first year learning communities to contribute to a sustained and coordinated effort to improve student success and persistence, careful consideration should be given to ways in which existing programs and services for first year students might be better coordinated and synergized, (e.g. Destination UNCG, Advising, SOAR, Summer Read, Summer Launch, Link-UP, Welcome Week, All Campus Read, UNS and SAS courses, Freshmen Seminar courses, Undergraduate Research, Residence Life programming, Service Learning and Leadership etc). Recognizing that a new initiative is now underway through a collaboration between Student Affairs and Undergraduate Studies guided by the Director of New Student and Spartan Family Programs and the Director of Undergraduate Student Excellence, it is recommended that this initiative coordinate and collaborate with the Director of Learning Communities in developing recommendations and plans for first year student programming.

14. Given the scope and time-table of Strategic Plan Goal 3.3, the current economic climate, and our previous recommendations for implementing it, the 3.3 Team further recommends that special consideration be given to identifying and encouraging LC models that effectively meet the dual goals of integrative learning and increased student persistence and that can be incrementally scaled up while using existing resources more effectively. Augmented with appropriate credit bearing courses drawn primarily, if not exclusively, from existing departmental and GEC offerings and supplemented with well designed integrative learning assignments, our existing Special Interest Housing programs and Residential Colleges could expand to enroll more students. Also, with the same course and curricular enhancements, LC models such as Linked courses, academically grounded Freshmen Interest Groups (FIGs) and Federated Learning Communities could be considered as particularly effective and relatively low cost options for an institution of UNCG's size.

For example, one effective and resource efficient "federated" model for including a significant portion of first year students in learning communities in a timely manner might be to identify large enrollment first year GEC courses and "block register" multiple cohorts of 25-30 students into common sections of these large lecture courses and into a concurrent smaller and academically enhanced UNS 101 or other "Learning Community" seminar / lab courses (such as LCC courses housed in Undergraduate Studies) that is taught by specially trained instructors drawn from existing UNS 101 instructors, adjuncts, academic professionals, student affairs professionals, post docs and others hired specifically for this purpose. The learning community seminar instructors could teach multiple sections of the seminar in a given area of the curriculum (e.g, science, art, humanities, health etc) and they could take the lead to work with faculty teaching the larger lecture sections to develop, assign and grade the appropriate integrative assignments and projects as a part of the smaller seminar. Using content from the larger lectures,

these typically specialized and academically enhanced “integrative seminars” might also include modules on information literacy, writing, speaking, service learning and foundational research practices as well as orientation to campus resources and developmentally appropriate instruction on wellness and transitional issues. The costs of hiring and training a sufficient number of integrative seminar leaders would be far less than buying out full time tenure stream faculty to teach small sections of new and specialized disciplinary courses. It also maximizes the opportunity and flexibility to link developmentally appropriate transitional programming, student affairs expertise and planned assessment strategies to these academically themed integrative learning communities without the (potentially difficult and time consuming) effort of substantively revising and supplementing departmental courses (e.g. ENG 101, CST 105 or FMS).

Some of our existing and successful programs, (notably, Grogan College) fit this model. Others could be enhanced to do so. Also, among the institutions that have successfully used a similar model to expand first year LCs on a large scale and to improve retention (and assessment) are Georgia State University, Ohio University Sacramento State, The University of Texas at Austin and the University of Texas A&M Corpus Christie

15. Cost estimates for a “federated” LC program are difficult to determine with precision, however, a rough estimate of a “low end” approach and a more expensive model might look as follows. To include all or most of our traditional freshmen (approximately 2500 students) in a federated LC model of the type described, the Team estimates that approximately 100 sections of the integrated seminar (enrolling 25-30 students each) will be required **in each semester** (for a two semester [program]). Some of those sections would likely be taught “in-load” by existing staff and non-tenure faculty as well as interested tenure faculty (thereby reducing costs). However, even assuming that all sections are staffed with new hires, and assuming the current adjunct hire rates (currently between \$3500 to \$7000 per course depending on the discipline), the cost of instructors for a **first semester only** program would range between a low of \$350,000 (\$140 per student) and a high of \$700,000 (\$280 per student). Also, some administrative support staff to assist the LC Director will be needed (for example, to manage course scheduling and HR paperwork etc.). An administrative support position might add between \$30,000-40,000 to the estimate. Inclusion of first year transfer students (another 1000 students) will add 40 sections and additional instructional costs between \$140,000 and \$280,000. The estimate for a **first semester only program** that includes all first year students (3500) and support staff would range from a low of approximately \$520,000 (\$150 per student) to a high of \$ 1, 020,000 (\$290 per student).

If the program were **extended to a second semester** (as we recommend) in a way that included an additional 1 or 2 credit “Integrative Seminar II” in the second semester, then the overall costs **for both semesters** might be in the range of 900,000 and \$2 million for the program **annually** (\$257 to \$571 per student).

However, these estimates do not include costs for additional student affairs and Housing resources that would likely be needed if more students engage more regularly in service learning, leadership development, career exploration, wellness, living-learning communities and other services relevant to first year student success, as well as support for academic affairs offices such as undergraduate research and library information literacy instruction.

Additionally, the estimates do not include costs for discretionary funding for community building activities, field trips and other activities that instructors might desire for their learning cohorts and that might contribute to cohort cohesion and ultimately to increased retention and persistence.

Finally, rather than relying primarily on part-time instructors paid on a by-the course basis, some institutions (notably the University of Texas A & M, Corpus Christie) have created full time academic professional positions to staff their first year integrative seminars. At Texas A&M Corpus Christie, these specialized academic professionals serves as first year seminar instructors and academic advisors, and they remain with the same cohorts of students for the entire first year. Moving in this direction has the advantages of better assuring the quality and continuity of instruction, mentoring and advising as well as offering opportunities for staff skill development and ongoing program improvement. At the same time, this approach also increases costs as the professional instructors are higher paid and receive benefits.

16. Other considerations needing to be addressed in a plan to significantly expand learning communities include classroom space needs, course scheduling, and advising.

17. Considering the options and budget estimates discussed above, the current economic climate, and the likelihood that the proposed expansion of learning communities at UNCG will occur incrementally over several years as new offerings are developed and more students enrolled, we recommend that senior leadership establish some common budget guidelines and an ongoing funding formula for the Director of Learning Communities and faculty and staff developing LC and LLC proposals. This will enable faculty and staff to plan more effectively, and assure a more equitable distribution of available resources and opportunities among LCs over time. For example, senior leadership might establish a budget guideline based on a certain dollar figure per student, or dedicate a baseline budget for the project as a whole within which staff developing the program over time must operate or entertain a system of contributions from the academic units. This will also help to identify those LC models that are most appropriate.

**Milestones:**

Establish Director of LCs position in Undergraduate Studies.  
Establish and fund LC Office.  
Establish LC Advisory Council.  
Establish a web site for the LC Office with information about LCs and how to enroll.  
Implement faculty information, recruitment, orientation and development webinars, workshops retreats and luncheons etc.  
Appoint faculty to teach in LCs and LLCs.  
Market and promote new LCs and LLCs, and recruit and enroll students.  
Develop assessment instruments and strategies to evaluate learning in LCs and LLCs.  
Implement assessments, analyze data and report results.  
Track student retention.  
Develop a plan to incrementally expand first year learning communities to reach the Strategic Plan Goal.

**Metrics:**

# of students enrolled in first year LCs/LLCs.  
# of LCs offered.  
# of course sections linked to LCs.  
# of faculty and staff engaged in LCs/LLCs.  
# of faculty utilizing high impact educational practices  
Increases in retention and persistence rates of student in LCs.

**Risk:** (To be completed in graph form by Bruce Griffin)

**ADDENDUM: Issues Requiring the Further Consideration of Senior Leadership**

Because of the scope, profound transformative potential, curricular implications and significant resource needs potentially entailed by fully implementing Strategic Plan Goal 3.3 , the Implementation Team determined that a number of important issues need to be highlighted that require the consideration and direction of senior leadership.

1. **Differences between traditional freshmen and transfer students:** Traditional college age freshmen are a different population from first year transfer students. The two groups arrive with different needs and at different points in their development and careers. Therefore, LCs and LLCs that are appropriate for traditional freshmen might not serve transfer students. Therefore, senior leadership might consider beginning implementation with freshmen and developing a program for transfer students at a later point.

2. **Curricular issues:** learning communities are about learning, and therefore they require and involve course work, faculty, and credits. As noted above, neither students nor faculty are likely to embrace LCs in the large numbers envisioned by the Strategic Plan unless they are integral to existing pathways to a degree and existing course offerings and faculty expertise. These

curricular dimensions of learning communities raise several issues (or options) that need to be considered.

- a) Should LCs be required for all first year students? If so, how is that to be achieved? If not, what will induce large numbers of first year students to join LCs? If we develop capacity to provide LCs to all first year students but do not require participation in some way, if students do not voluntarily enroll in large numbers, is that the best use of resources?
- b) Currently, UNCG's UNS 101 course is not required. Some campuses require this type of extended orientation and basic skills course for all first year students and make it a core component of the LC program for first year students. Should UNS or another LCC course be required for all first year students at UNCG? If so, should that course be made a core component of our first year LC program?
- c) If UNS is required and used to provide a key component of all first year LCs, does our current course need revision and academic enhancement to provide the integrative learning assignments and other features sought in the recommendations of the 3.3 Team? If so, will staff who currently teach this course still be qualified to teach it, or will some new instructors be required?
- d) Should an enhanced UNS or other integrative LCC course be required for both the first and second semester of a student's first year, providing the foundation for a comprehensive and developmentally sequenced first year experience program? If that is desirable, how is it to be required?
- e) Will key GEC offerings such as ENG 101 become an integral part of the LC program given that the existing courses are part of the offerings of individual academic departments and often reflect the needs and interests of those academic units, their majors and graduate students? If such courses become a key component of LCs, do they need to be revised? If so, faculty will need to be involved.
- f) Should integrative learning be made a GEC requirement and be delivered through LCs?
- g) How will students in majors requiring significant numbers of credit hours participate without exceeding the credit hour limit and paying additional costs?

**3. Advising and Registration Issues:** Currently, advising is decentralized across the Schools and the College and relies heavily on faculty advising. For the purposes of the first year LC program, is it important for first year students or some portion of them (e.g. undeclared students) to be centrally advised? If some populations of students are not centrally advised, coordination among the LC Office, LC instructors and the various Academic Advising centers will be required and might increase administrative costs.

**4. Staffing:** Approval and funding for a Director of Learning Communities position has been secured and a search begun. However, this is one position. To implement an LC program of the scope and nature envisioned by the Strategic Plan, additional administrative support staff and instructors will likely be needed as the plan is implemented.

**5. Web Presence:** In order to reach prospective students, faculty, alumni, potential donors and the campus community on a regular and timely basis, and to have the transformative impact sought by the strategic Plan, the LC program will require a prominent location on the UNCG home page, as well as technical support from experienced web designers and managers to keep



information updated. Senior leadership must consider the appropriate positioning of this initiative on the UNCG web site as well as the staff and other resource needed to maintain it.

**6. Budget Issues:** As noted in our recommendations, there are different structural models for LCs; some more resource intensive than others. Typically, the greatest results in terms of retention, persistence and academic achievement are found in the more resource intensive approaches (e.g. fully team taught coordinated studies programs and full fledged residential colleges similar to the Warren Ashby College). Budget guidance and a funding formula are needed from senior leadership so that staff and faculty can determine the “best fit” model given our retention goals and available resources.

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**ANNUAL ACTIVITIES/BUDGET/RESPONSIBLE PART/RISK**

2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015

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