

Themed Learning Communities (TLCs)

Qualitative Report (Fall 2013)

University College
Indiana University Purdue University, Indianapolis (IUPUI)

Jessica Rauch,
Graduate Research Analyst
jtrauch@iupui.edu

Michele J. Hansen, Ph.D.,
Executive Director of Research, Planning, and Evaluation
mjhansen@iupui.edu

October, 2014

Table of Contents

Page # / Content

- 3.) Executive Summary
- 5.) Introduction, Sample, and Method
- 6.) Co-Occurrence / 2013 General Result Highlights
- 7.) Comparison Highlights: 2009 – 2013 TLC Cohorts
- 9.) Table 1: How the TLC Experience Contributed to Learning (Student Reported), Fall 2013
- 11.) Table 2: Student Reported Most Liked Aspect of the TLC Experience, Fall 2013
- 13.) Table 3: Student Reported Least Liked Aspect of the TLC Experience, Fall 2013
- 15.) Table 4: Student Reported Reasons for Enrolling in a TLC, Fall 2013
- 17.) Table 5: Specific Suggestions for Improving the Themed Learning Communities (TLCs), Fall 2013
- 19.) References

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of students' perceptions and opinions of the 2013 Themed Learning Community (TLC) program. TLCs are designed to facilitate students' transitions to the university and promote higher retention rates and levels of academic performance. National research has shown that participation in LCs increases students' engagement levels such as campus involvement, integrative and higher-order thinking, and provides a constructive way for students to relationships with peers and faculty (Pike, Kuh, McCormick 2011; Zhao & Kuh, 2004). These levels of engagement can lead to a more successful first-year college experience, persistence into the second year, and higher rate of graduation (Andrade, 2008).

A total of 871 IUPUI First-Time, Full-Time students were enrolled in 40 separate TLC program sections during the fall 2013 semester. Participants enrolled in a TLC were asked to voluntarily respond to an anonymous questionnaire at the end of the program. Students provided open-ended feedback in the areas of how the TLCs contributed to their learning, what they liked most and least about the program, why they chose to enroll, and suggestions for improvement. This report examines notable findings of 2013 students' open-ended responses. To view an electronic copy of this report and other assessment reports please visit: <http://osdae.iupui.edu/home>.

Major Findings

Students described several ways in which the TLC program contributed to their learning. These included but were not limited to: receiving college transition assistance, meeting new friends and developing connections, developing critical thinking skills, being enrolled in linked courses, developing peer support networks, and becoming more comfortable and confident. This is consistent with findings from previous program years (2009-2012) with a few exceptions. For example, students reported developing critical thinking skills as contributing to their learning with a higher frequency in 2013 compared to 2011. Additionally, students in 2013 were more likely to reference the courses being connected in their responses compared to previous TLC cohorts.

Participants also described what they liked the most about their TLC experiences. Students responded that meeting new people and forming friendships, having the same students in classes, participating in group activities and discussions, and having positive instructional team support were aspects of the TLC that they liked the most. These program components were consistently within the top four most discussed areas by participants in all five program years (2009-2013). Least liked aspects of the TLC program were also described by student participants. Some students simply indicated N/A, none, or nothing in response to this question. Still, other students described a specific linked course or component (e.g., First-Year Seminar, English). Similar to previous program years, students also reported a perceived lack of organization and time commitments and restraints as least valuable aspects.

Students also provided insight into the specific reasons why they chose to enroll in a TLC. College transition assistance was the #1 most frequent response given by both the 2012 and 2011 student cohorts. In comparison, it was the #3 most common response provided in 2010 and 2013 and the #5 most frequent response in 2009. Similar to previous years, some students indicated that they enrolled because they were required to participate in a TLC (or they thought it was required). Finally, 2013 students also indicated that they enrolled in a TLC because it was connected to their major or career choice or they were referred or recommended into the program. In 2013, meeting new friends and developing connections, was the first time in 3 years it was the #1 response.

2013 TLC participants also provided a variety of suggestions for improvement. These included but are not limited to: having more (outside) group activities and discussions, improving program organization and

communication, improving course and theme linkages, providing more instructional team support, and having less time commitments and restraints. These recommendations are consistent with those given by students in previous years.

Possible Implications

Analysis of the 2013 TLC qualitative data reveals several possible implications. It is notable that TLC students have identified the areas of college transition assistance and developing academic skills as ways in which the program has contributed to their learning. The latter (develop academic skills) is perhaps most promising in that it will carry with the student and help them in their future careers.

It is also notable that college transition assistance was the #1 most valuable aspect identified by 2012 TLC students, but not the 2013 TLC students. In comparison, the #1 most common response given in 2011 and 2010 was meeting new people and developing friendships, which also shows back up in 2013 as what they liked the most. Additionally, 2012 students reported that they enrolled in a TLC specifically for college transition assistance, but the 2013 students responded they enrolled explicitly to meet new friends and develop connections. These changes in response ranks may reflect a perceived higher value by students in gaining lasting friends that could help them in future classes. Further examination of this possible new trend may be needed. With TLCs being mostly freshman students, it is helpful to know that they are finding the TLC communities are making them more comfortable in college and their college courses.

An overview of qualitative findings across the past five program years (2009-2013) reveals that students are reporting many of the same suggestions for improvement and least valuable program aspects in their open-ended responses. However, it is important to highlight that a greater number of students in 2013 suggested more organization in programs than in previous years. It is more notable that a large amount of students had no ideas about how to improve the program, and the next five responses were all between 9%-7%.

Assessment of the Themed Learning Community program is an on-going process. This process is designed to identify both program areas of achievement and those in need of improvement. A detailed account of students' self-reported perceptions of the TLC program are provided on the following pages and include numerous examples of actual student comments (Tables 1-5). It may be helpful to share this information with TLC stakeholders and instructional teams as appropriate. Ideally, through gaining a greater understanding of students' TLC experiences we will be able to further understand effective teaching and learning.

Introduction

The goal of this report is to provide an overview of students' perceptions and opinions of the 2013 Themed Learning Community (TLC) program. TLCs offer an intentional first semester experience for students. Approximately 25 students co-enroll in 2-4 academic courses and a First-year Seminar (FYS) course to create each individual community. A guiding theme is chosen by professors to guide curriculum and instruction. The purpose of the TLC program is to provide a comprehensive perspective about higher education and help students see relationships among academic courses, co-curricular activities, and the world.

Students enrolled in a TLC were asked to voluntarily respond to an anonymous questionnaire administered at the end of the program. Within this questionnaire students were encouraged to provide open-ended response feedback in the areas of what they liked the most and least about their community, suggestions for improvement, and reasons for participating in the program. It is our hope that highlighting these responses will assist in recognizing areas of achievement while also providing pathways for improving teaching and learning.

Sample

The qualitative section of the Themed Learning Community Evaluation Form consisted of five (5) open-ended questions that provided students with an opportunity to provide feedback about their TLC experiences in their own words. This report reflects questionnaire responses of students who participated in a TLC during the fall 2013 semester. During this time period a total of 871 First-Time, Full-Time IUPUI students were enrolled in almost 40 separate TLC sections. The number of student questionnaire responses varied depending on the question asked:

<u>Questions:</u>	<u>Fall 2013</u>
25.) <i>Please describe how your TLC experience has contributed to your learning:</i>	<u>660</u>
26.) <i>Please describe what you liked most about your Themed Learning Community experience:</i>	<u>678</u>
27.) <i>Please describe what you like least about your Themed Learning Community experience:</i>	<u>711</u>
28.) <i>Please describe the reason(s) why you enrolled in a TLC. Why, specifically, did you choose this TLC?</i>	<u>693</u>
29.) <i>What specific suggestions do you have for improving the Themed Learning Communities?</i>	<u>679</u>

Method

Most students responded to the five open-ended items included in the questionnaire. Student participants' open-ended questionnaire responses uploaded into ATLAS.ti, a software program that assists in qualitative data analysis. A coding process was then employed as a method of investigating emergent themes.

Results

Through the examination of open-ended response feedback students' perceptions of the TLCs were obtained. These perceptions included students' opinions regarding what they liked most and least about the program, suggestions for improvement, and reasons for enrolling in a specific TLC. First, a *General Result Highlights* section outlines notable opinions and perceptions of students in the fall 2013 TLC cohort. Next, a *Comparison Highlights* section is included in an effort to gain a better understanding of how fall 2013 students responded similarly or differently to questions than fall 2009-2012 TLC students. Finally, tables are also provided that detail student responses to each of the five (5) open-ended questions. These tables are sorted by question item, and include numerous examples of actual student comments.

2013 General Result Highlights (Specific Codes in "Quotations")

Q25.) Please describe how your TLC experience contributed to your learning:

- "NA, None, Blank" was the #1 most common response provided (19%) by student participants when they were asked to describe how their TLC experiences contributed to their learning.
- 18% of students described "Developed Academic Skills" as an aspect of their TLC experience that contributed to their learning, the #2 most frequent response given.
- "Helpful-linked courses" was also referenced by students (13%) as a way in which their TLC experience contributed to their learning, the #3 most common response provided.
- Students indicated that many other aspects of their TLC experience contributed to learning including: having "College Transition Assistance" (11%); "Understanding Diversity, Society, Global Issues" (10%), "Became More Comfortable/Confident" (6%); "Major & Career Discovery" (5%); "General Positive Comment" (4%); "Developed Peer Support Network" (4%); "Developed Study Time, Stress Management Skills" (3%); "Application of Knowledge" (3%); "Same Students In Classes" (2%).

Q26.) Please describe what you liked most about your Themed Learning Community experience:

- "Meeting New People & Forming Friendships" was the #1 most common response provided (35%) when student participants were asked to describe what they liked most about their Themed Learning Community experience.
- 19% of students described that having the "Same Students in Classes" was what they liked most about their TLC experience; the #2 most common answer given.
- 12% of students gave non-specific answers. With "NA, None, or Blank" making up 88% of this category.
- 11% of students indicated having "Academic Skills Help" as what they liked most about their TLC program experience.

Q27.) Please describe what you like least about your Themed Learning Community experience:

- 31% of students indicated "N/A, None, or Left it Blank" when they were prompted to describe what they liked least about their program experiences; the #1 most common answer provided.
- 11% of students reported a "Specific Linked Course or Component" when describing what they liked the least about their TLC program experience. Within these responses students specified the classes "Didn't Connect" with the most frequency (2%).
- 11% of students described perceived "Extensive Academic Writing/Projects" as being what they liked least about their TLC experience; the #3 most common response. Within this category students described "Too Much Work" the most (70%).

- 10% indicated “Not Meaningful, Helpful, Productive” as the least desirable program aspect. This was the #4 most frequent answer provided. Within this category “Pointless Assignments” was most frequently reported (39%).

Q28.) Please describe the reason(s) why you enrolled in a TLC. Why, specifically, did you choose this TLC?

- When asked to describe the reason for enrolling in a TLC, 14% of students reported that they thought the program would help “Meet New Friends and Develop Connections”. This was the #1 most common response provided.
- 11% of student participants indicated that they enrolled in a TLC because they were “Referred or It Was Recommended”. 80% of students reported that they enrolled in a TLC because their advisor was the one that recommended the program.
- 11% of students reported that they enrolled in a TLC because they were “Required to Participate”.
- 10% of students chose to be in the TLC because it “Connected to Major or Career Choice”.

Q29.) What specific suggestions do you have for improving the Themed Learning Communities?

- 48% of students indicated “N/A, None, Nothing” when asked to provide suggestions for improving the TLC program; the #1 most frequent response given.
- 9% of students provided the suggestion “Improve Program Organization and Communication”. This was the #2 most common recommendation provided.
- 9% of students provided the suggestion to “Improve or Cancel Specific Courses or Components”. Within these responses the number one response was “Make Classes Connect” (63%).
- Other areas of improvement suggested by students included: “Less Time Commitments and Restraints” (8%); “More Projects/Activities/Interesting” (7%); “More (outside) group activities and discussions” (7%).

Comparison Highlights: 2009 – 2013 TLC Cohorts

Please describe how your TLC experience contributed to your learning:

- “College Transition Assistance” was the #1 most common response given by students in 2012 (16%) and 2009 (15%), when they were asked to describe how their TLC experience contributed to their learning. It was the #2 most common response in both 2011 (12%) and 2010 (11%). This response was #3 most common in 2013 (11%).
- “Meeting New People and Forming Friendships” was the #2 most common response given by students in both the 2012 (12%) and 2009 (13%) TLC cohorts. However, it was the #1 most frequent answer by students in both 2011 (16%) and 2010 (13%). This response was not found in the responses in 2013.
- “Developed Critical Thinking Skills” was the #3 most common response provided in 2012 (9%) and 2010 (10%). It was also reported by students in 2011 but with fewer occurrences (#6, 7%). In 2013 this response was changed to say “Developed Academic Skills” and was the #1 most common response given (15%). Within the “Developed Academic Skills/Focus on School Work” category are all of the same responses under “Developed Critical Thinking Skills” but added were a few other responses that could make the category more encompassing of all academic skills.

Please describe what you liked most about your Themed Learning Community experience:

- “Meeting New People & Forming Friendships” was the #1 most frequently coded response provided by students in 2013 (35%), 2012 (42%), 2011 (33%), 2010 (44%), and 2009 (48%) when they were asked to identify what they liked most about their TLC experiences.
- “Same Students in Classes” was the #2 most common response provided by students in 2013 (19%), 2012 (18%), 2011 (15%), 2010 (21%), and 2009 (16%), when they were asked to describe what they liked most.

Please describe what you like least about your Themed Learning Community experience:

- “N/A, None, Nothing” was the #1 most frequent response given by students in the 2012 (16%) and 2013 (31%) TLC cohort when they were asked to indicate a least valuable aspect. It was the #2 response in both 2011 (13%) and 2010 (11%), and the #5 response in 2009 (9%).
- “Specific Linked Course or Component” was the #2 most common response provided by students in 2012 (15%), 2009 (10%), and 2013 (13%) cohorts when they were asked to describe a least valuable TLC aspect. It was the #1 most frequent response in 2011 (15%) and 2010 (12%).
- “Lack of Organization” (2012, 11%; 2011, 10%; 2010, 11%; 2009, 9%) and “Time Commitments and Constraints” (2012, 9%; 2011, 12%; 2010, 11%; 2009, 10%) and have been commonly reported by TLC students as the #3 and #4 least liked program aspects. In 2013 neither of those responses were in the top 4 of most common responses given.

Please describe the reason(s) why you enrolled in a TLC. Why, specifically, did you choose this TLC?

- “College Transition Assistance” was the #1 most frequent response given by students in both the 2012 (19%) and 2011 (19%) cohorts when asked to describe the reasons for enrolling in a TLC. It was the #3 most frequent response in 2010 (18%) and #5 answer in 2009 (12%) as well as #6 answer in 2013 (9%).
- “Required to Participate in a TLC (or thought was required)” was the #2 reason given by students in both the 2012 (16%) and 2011 (15%) cohorts when asked to identify why they enrolled in the program. It was the #1 most common reason given by the 2010 cohort (19%) and the #4 most common reason provided in 2009 (16%) and 2013 (11%).
- “Connected to Major or Career Choice” was the #3 most common response provided by students in 2012 (13%) and 2009 (16%). It was the #5 most common answer given in 2011 (13%), 2010 (13%), and 2013 (10%).

What specific suggestions do you have for improving the Themed Learning Communities?

- “N/A, None, Nothing” was the #1 most frequent suggestion for improvement provided by students in 2013 (48%), 2012 (35%), 2011 (31%), 2010 (26%), and the 2009 (24%) TLC cohorts.
- “More (Outside) Group Activities and Discussions” was the #2 most common suggestion for improvement provided by students in both 2012 (10%) and 2009 (9%). It was the #5 most common response given in 2013 (7%). It was the #6 most common suggestion given in 2011 (6%) and 2010 (7%).
- “Improve Program Organization & Communication” was the #3 most common suggestion for improvement given by both 2012 (9%) and 2011 (10%) TLC students. It was the #2 most common suggestion given in 2010 (13%) and 2013 (9%), and the #9 most common suggestion provided in 2009 (5%).

Table 1: How the TLC Experience Contributed to Learning (Student Reported), Fall 2013

Please describe how your TLC experience contributed to your learning: (N = 660)

Contributed to Learning Through...	N	%	Examples of Actual Student Comments
NA, None, Blank, Not Specific	<u>124</u>	<u>19%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Nothing Really.” • “NA”
Developed Academic Skills/Focus on School Work	<u>102</u>	<u>15%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “It helped me focus more on my work.” • “I think it helped me do better with my school work.” • “TLC contributed to my learning because it has helped me become a better writer and also speak more.” • “I learned how to organize essays and how to use excel.” • “It helped me learn study skills.” • “It helped my learning skills.”
Helpful – Linked Courses	<u>89</u>	<u>14%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Having the classes being connected made it so it wasn't overly stressful.” • “It allowed me to tie ideas together from one class to another.” • “I learned that there are some topics in one class tied to another topic in a different class.” • “In each class I brought something from another class into said class which gave me a view that was not traditional.” • “Helped connect Artistic Ideas to classes I wouldn't think to apply them to.” • “I was able to integrate Ideas from women's studies into my writing and it made my writing better.”
College Transition Assistance	<u>84</u>	<u>13%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I felt I knew the campus better.” • “Helped me adjust to college and made me comfortable with my friends.” • “It helped me transition into college easier since I was so used to high school life still.” • “It helped me with basics for college.” • “It was a great transition into the first semester.” • “I felt more prepared for college, better study skills, time management and note taking skills.” • “It helped me find the right services for academic help (MAC, Bepko).”
Understanding Diversity, Society, Global Issues	<u>70</u>	<u>10%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “It allowed me to look at things from a different perspective.” • “Gave me a new perspective on my learning and showed me what I need to improve on.” • “I learned of new cultures.” • “Broadened horizons and transcended perceptions.” • “View stereotypes much easier with more understanding.” • “I found my classes engaging and helpful for stretching me as a person.” • “It broadened our perspective on Peace & Resolutions as they appear in every avenue of life.” • “This TLC made me realize and analyze the different stereotypes and bring to my attention how they are perpetuated in society through media.”
Became More Comfortable/ Confident	<u>41</u>	<u>6%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “It made me feel more comfortable, so I focused more.” • “Being a part of the TLC has made my learning experience easier by having people I am comfortable.” • “It brought me out of my shell and made me feel more comfortable in the classroom.”

(Continued)

Continued – Table 1:

Please describe how your TLC experience contributed to your learning:

Contributed to Learning...	N	%	Examples of Actual Student Comments
Major & Career Discovery	<u>33</u>	<u>5%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “It taught me a lot I didn’t know about researching and nanotechnology.” • “I became more informed about my selected career.” • “It was very helpful to decide a major.” • “Really helped me learn about myself through speech & UCOL to help figure out majors & careers for me.” • “Helped me choose a career path.” • “I learned things about myself I never knew/realized before, and I learned how to apply that to how I live my life and how I plan my future.”
General Positive Comment	<u>29</u>	<u>4%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I had a great TLC experience.” • “I loved it!” • “It had a very positive impact.”
Developed Peer Support Network	<u>27</u>	<u>4%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “It made me think more thoroughly about social issues.” • “Made me work well with others I’ve never worked with before.” • “I was able to connect with people of my major and get different views.” • “It allowed me to have a network of people who were all going through the same experience.” • “I loved being in a TLC because if I needed help, I had 24 other students to help me.” • “I liked having all art kids, but it took any and all competition away everyone knew my skill and there was no reason to impress them.” • “It made it easier knowing people to help if you were having difficulty on something.” • “I was able to discuss my classes w/ others + better grasp how to do better in my classes.”
Integration and Application of Knowledge	<u>20</u>	<u>3%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I learned how to apply my engineering skills to the real world.” • “It made me feel like what I am learning is more relevant.” • “I learned how to connect social issues w/ everyday life.” • “It helped me see the bigger picture and use my head and things I learned to solve real world problems.” • “It was very beneficial learning about issues, not just in the classroom but by taking field trips and having speakers.”
Same Students in Classes	<u>16</u>	<u>2%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Knowing other people in various classes.” • “It was great having the same people in class, allowed for communication.” • “Being around the same group every class made the environment much more comfortable.” • “Was able to relate with the same people in 3 different classes.” • “Smaller classes more focused.”

Notes: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole. The remaining responses were so varied that no major themes emerged. (N) indicates the number of student responses included in analysis; percentages (%) are based on the number of question respondents.

Table 2: Student Reported Most Liked Aspect of the TLC Experience, Fall 2013

Please describe what you liked the **most** about your Themed Learning Community experience: (N = 678)

Most Liked Aspect	N	%	Examples of Actual Student Comments
Meeting New People & Forming Friendships	<u>238</u>	<u>35%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Meeting new friends.” • “The teacher & relationships I made with classmates.” • “The friendship that was established.” • “I liked meeting new people and making friendship connections that could help me in my other classes.” • “I created friendships and met a lot of people.” • “I loved being able to meet my best friends.” • “That I had a group of people that I became friends with that will carry through.”
Same Students in Classes	<u>128</u>	<u>19%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Same classmates helped me feel comfortable at beginning.” • “Getting to be with the same people for most of my classes.” • “Being in 3 of the same classes with the same people to be able to form good, lasting friendships.” • “I liked that my themed learning community allowed me to be with the same people so I felt more comfortable with class activities.” • “I liked having the same 25 students for each class of the TLC, because it formed strong bonds and I saw familiar faces, so it was comforting.” • “I really liked how everyone felt like we are all one family. You can always ask anyone for help and they are always there for you.”
NA, None, Nothing, Not Specific	<u>83</u>	<u>12%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Nothing.” • “Nothing really.” • “Everything is okay.”
Academic Skills Help	<u>76</u>	<u>11%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “My teacher.” • “I liked my class & most professors. There was always something new & exciting.” • “I liked most that everything we learned can be applied to every aspect of life, within and out of school.” • “The fantastic professors.” • “I loved my professors! They were extremely smart, fair, interesting and helpful.” • “Learning more about nursing, and applying sociological themes to the medical field.”
College Transition Assistance	<u>29</u>	<u>4</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I enjoyed getting to know downtown Indy and getting more involved on campus with my classmates.” • “I really liked the assistance provided through the TLC, like mentoring sessions for anatomy” • “I liked the Bridge activities the most because of the opportunity to meet new friends in a new place.” • “Getting to know everyone it was a good transition from high school.” • “Getting to know the campus and people.”
Connections Between Linked Classes	<u>28</u>	<u>4%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Ideas shared between classes.” • “Integrated topics.” • “I liked linked classes.” • “Having knowledge of topics that related to other courses.” • “Connections between classes made it easy to use info from one class in another.” • “That the classes overlapped and helped me grasp ideas and concepts • “Common classes.”

(Continued)

Continued – Table 2:

Please describe what you liked the most about your Themed Learning Community experience:

Most Liked Aspect	N	%	Examples of Actual Student Comments
Group Activities and Discussions	<u>26</u>	<u>4%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The discussions.” • “All of the open discussion and activity.” • “I liked the conversations that we had together.” • “The group discussions.” • “I liked how my Biology classes and UCOL class discussed our progress.” • “Working on projects with people.” • “I liked the casual atmosphere and projects.”
Positive Instructional Team Support	<u>24</u>	<u>4%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I enjoyed getting to know my classmates and having a community in which I got to ask questions.” • “Forming relationships with people and knowing I can go to them for class help.” • “I could ask any classmate about upcoming classes and better prepare for said class.” • “I loved how involved we were with students and the teachers.” • “I liked having classmates to study with for anatomy.”
Developed a Sense of Community	<u>21</u>	<u>3%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I liked becoming a community with my class mates.” • “The sense of community with peers in class.” • “The family we created.” • “The acceptance of the IUPUI community.” • “Feeling connected.”
Outside Activities/Service/Volunteer	<u>22</u>	<u>3%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Pizza!” • “The field trips.” • “We had lots of field trips to experience outside and learn more about school.” • “I liked volunteering.” • “Community service experience and friends.”

Notes: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole. The remaining responses were so varied that no major themes emerged.
 (N) indicates the number of student responses included in analysis; percentages (%) are based on the number of question respondents
 (*) indicates a sub-code of the larger thematic category; numbers in parenthesis (N) are based on the total number of respondents.

Table 3: Student Reported Least Liked Aspect of the TLC Experience, Fall 2013

Please describe what you liked least about your Themed Learning Community experience: (N = 711)

Least Liked Aspect	N	%	Examples of Actual Student Comments
N/A, None, Nothing	<u>220</u>	<u>31%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “N/A.” • “None.” • “Nothing.” • “Everything was fun.” • “Nothing it was an amazing experience.” • “I cannot think of what I liked least.”
Specific Linked Course or Component *Classes Connect /Didn’t Connect (77) *First-year Seminar (5) *English Course (7)	<u>89</u>	<u>13%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Not enough integration of all 3 courses.” • “How they blend into each other a l little too well.” • “I don’t like one class being dependent on the other two” • “I felt babied in a way.” • “How the teachers always watched us and made it feel like High school.” • “Some of the classes (English) was very challenging.” • “My English class.”
Extensive Academic Writing/Projects	<u>78</u>	<u>11%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The extensive writing.” • “Projects take up heavy amounts of time.” • “I felt very overloaded at the end, and honestly needed a change of instruction material.” • “All the writing projects.” • “The weekly assignments that were due.” • “The advisor and the extra work that took away from my other classes.”
Not Meaningful, Helpful, Productive (Busy Work)	<u>70</u>	<u>10%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The busy work and assignments for windows on science.” • “Reflections are so repetitive and a waste of time.” • “Some of it was just busy work.” • “The non-useful homework.” • “I feel like the classes that went with the TLC were not very relevant or useful.” • “Did not learn much in here.”
Lack of Organization (31) *Class Scheduling Difficulties (21)	<u>52</u>	<u>7%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The organization at times could be very impromptu.” • “There was often confusion between teachers and deadlines.” • “Seminar it was poorly done and very unorganized.” • “Drop 1 class, you have to drop them all.” • “That it wasn’t more classes included.” • “The time schedule.” • “My classes were back to back on Mondays.” • “I disliked how we set up our scheduling classes, very confusing.”

(Continued)

Continued – Table 3

Please describe what you liked least about your Themed Learning Community experience:

Least Liked Aspect	N	%	Examples of Actual Student Comments
Teacher	<u>45</u>	<u>6%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Some of the teachers (history).” • “My history class because I feel like the teacher didn't teach and I never understand her.” • “My English teacher.” • “I was uncomfortable with how blunt my professors were sometimes.” • “I really disliked the selection of our speech instructor.”
Time Commitments and Restraints	<u>32</u>	<u>6%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Meeting for three hours was not needed.” • “I didn't like how long it was.” • “I disliked that my learning community class met once a week for 3 hours.” • “I did not like meeting one time a week.”
Journals/Projects	<u>37</u>	<u>5%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The excel project was too extensive.” • “Doing the excel project I feel like it was a little too advanced for where we are at in our degree.” • “The long projects.” • “Some projects in all the classes were not explained well enough.”
Extracurricular Activities *Wanted More (11) *Too Much (16)	<u>27</u>	<u>4%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I wanted to be more community services.” • “I wish we would have done things outside of the classes together.” • “I did not like the 15 hours of service learning, it is too many hours for a semester.” • “I did not like that we had to volunteer at second helpings.”
Same People/Teachers	<u>26</u>	<u>4%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Being with the same kids every day.” • “I would have liked to have met with lots of different people.” • “Having to see people I don't every day. Some of the teachers.” • “Once you made friends, those were your friends... Having all the same students, there were few opportunities to make more once the group had an opinion of you.” • “Sometimes being with the same people too much can get annoying.”
General Positive Comment	<u>15</u>	<u>2%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “It didn't last for the whole semester.” • “I wish it was more than one semester!” • “That it was only three class”
Lack of Instructional Team Support	<u>8</u>	<u>1%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The advising wasn't supportive or beneficial finding info out late.” • “Lack of activity in the TLC. There could have been more discussed about what the campus has to offer.”

Notes: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole. The remaining responses were so varied that no major themes emerged. (N) indicates the number of student responses included in analysis; percentages (%) are based on the number of question respondents. (*) indicates a sub-code of the larger thematic category; numbers in parenthesis (N) are based on the total number of respondents.

Table 4: Student Reported Reasons for Enrolling in a TLC, Fall 2013

Please describe the reason(s) why you enrolled in a TLC. Why, specifically, did you choose this TLC?
(N = 693)

Reasons for enrolling in a TLC	N	%	Examples of Actual Student Comments
Meet New Friends and Develop Connections	<u>100</u>	<u>14%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “For the college experience and meeting friends.” • “Meet new people.” • “To involve with people of my major.” • “I enrolled to meet new people and make connections. I chose this TLC because I intend to be a business major.” • “To be a part of the athlete community.” • “So I could get to know people.”
NA, None, Blank	<u>81</u>	<u>12%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “None.” • “Nothing.” • “No reason.” • “I don’t remember.”
Referred or Recommended *Academic Advisor (59) *Orientation Leader (12) *Friend Asked Me To (3)	<u>74</u>	<u>13%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “My advisor said it would be good.” • “I chose this TLC because my advisor recommended it. She said I would love the teacher and the schedule.” • “My orientation group did.” • “Orientation, I was persuaded to take one.” • “My friend asked me too and I did. I’m glad I did it.”
Required to Participate	<u>74</u>	<u>11%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “It wasn’t an option not to.” • “I had to for English class.” • “Enrollment was required.” • “I did not get to choose.” • “21st Century Scholars requirement.”
Connected to Major or Career Choice	<u>67</u>	<u>10%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I chose this because it had all the required classes to take for an education major.” • “It was related to my major.” • “Late getting signed up and the classes matched my core requirements for my major.” • “It mixed well with my major.” • “It had the classes I needed to take together.”
Head Start on College	<u>65</u>	<u>9%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Because I wanted to know about IUPUI before I actually start school.” • “To know what it was like on campus and become familiar with it.” • “Looked like a good way to get adapted to college.” • “Thought it might help assimilate me into school.” • “To help my transition in college.”
Potential to be Beneficial	<u>60</u>	<u>9%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I knew that it would help me better understand myself and my community.” • “Thought it would be a different perspective than I had before and it would be simple to pass.” • “Thought it would help me learn IUPUI.” • “To improve my chances of having a successful undergraduate experience.”

(Continued)

Continued – Table 4

Please describe the reason(s) why you enrolled in a TLC. Why, specifically, did you choose this TLC?

Reasons for enrolling in a TLC	N	%	Examples of Actual Student Comments
Interested in Community “Theme”	<u>44</u>	<u>6%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “It sounded interesting.” • “Geeks, Freaks, & Cliques sounded like an interesting topic of discussion.” • “I enrolled because I wanted to learn more about the themes in this TLC.” • “I thought "Dangerous Minds" sounded cool.” • “To feel more connected to IUPUI and I think Pandemics are interesting.”
Same Students/Teachers in All Classes	<u>40</u>	<u>6%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Thought it would be good to have the same classes with the same people.” • “I wanted the closeness of being with some of the same people.” • “I liked that I would be in the same class with the same students.” • “To have a set of instructors and a class.” • “To get to know the same people and get comfortable with them.”
Desirable Course Schedule	<u>28</u>	<u>4%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Fit schedule.” • “I choose this TLC because it fit my work schedule.” • “It made scheduling classes easier.” • “Most flexible schedule.” • “It was easier.”
Did Not Choose TLC (Placed In)	<u>25</u>	<u>4%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I just kind of picked something.” • “I really just chose at random when registering.” • “There were no other ones available.” • “Last minute.” • “Only TLC left to choose from when I signed up for classes.”
BRIDGE *Part of BRIDGE (18) *Couldn’t/Didn’t Want to Do BRIDGE (5)	<u>23</u>	<u>3%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I enrolled because it was part of bridge and I knew it would be helpful.” • I enrolled to be a part of the Bridge program • Bridge, a starter program • • I chose it because I couldn't sign up for Bridge, but I think the TLC is very fun. • I didn't want to do bridge, so I chose TLC instead. • Mostly because I did not want to take Summer bridge but I'm glad I chose a TLC.
Classes Connected to One Another	<u>10</u>	<u>1%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I am an exercise science major and wanted to take them grouped.” • “I choose to enroll in a TLC that was linked to 3 classes because it would help me to do better in those classes.” • “It includes 3 classes integrated together.”

Notes: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole. The remaining responses were so varied that no major themes emerged.
 (N) indicates the number of student responses included in analysis; percentages (%) are based on the number of question respondents.
 (*) indicates a sub-code of the larger thematic category; numbers in parenthesis (N) are based on the total number of respondents.

Table 5: Specific Suggestions for Improving the Themed Learning Communities (TLC) Fall, 2013

What specific suggestions do you have for improving the Themed Learning Communities? (N = 679)

Suggestions for Improvement	N	%	Examples of Actual Student Comments
N/A, None, Nothing	<u>333</u>	<u>48%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “N/A.” • “None.” • “Nothing.” • “No suggestions.” • “I don’t have specific suggestions for improving the TLC.”
Improve Program Organization and Communication	<u>62</u>	<u>9%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “More organization.” • “A little more structure.” • “Pick the teachers wisely.” • “Find teachers who actually want to teach learning communities.” • “TLC could have another class added.”
Improve or Cancel Specific Courses or Components	<u>61</u>	<u>9%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Make the classes connect.” • “Have more of the projects and papers transfer to other classes.” • “Ensure that all classes are required for the program!” • “Keep the English class out of the science area.” • “Get rid of 1st year seminar there no need for it.” • “Cancelling V100.”
Less Time Commitments and Restraints	<u>53</u>	<u>8%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Make it the whole first year.” • “Make it longer. I wish it was more than one semester.” • “A little more time together.” • “Have the B104 meet less.” • “Make the class not so late.” • “Make it longer than one semester. Make the class less than 3 hours.”
More (Outside) Group Activities and Discussions	<u>49</u>	<u>7%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “More field trips.” • “I think there should have a lot of social events in the community so that you can get to know others.” • “I would do more projects maybe do a community project together.” • “Ice breakers with students from other majors.” • “I suggest they have more social events for members of the TLC.” • “More social gatherings that are not all academic related.”
More Projects/Activities/Interesting	<u>42</u>	<u>7%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Make it more interesting.” • “Probably more fun and interactive classes.” • “Doing more group projects.” • “More fun activities.” • “More interactive.”
General Positive Comment	<u>27</u>	<u>4%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Keep it all the same!!” • “I don’t think there could be anything better.” • “Nothing everything was great.” • “Not much improvement because I like the class.” • “It’s great doesn’t need to be improved.” • “Just keep having it each year!”
Less Work	<u>23</u>	<u>3%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Maybe less work during the time program application are due.” • “I would say not writing journals, but it is a vital factor to develop skills.” • “Less homework.” • “Make the V100 class less intense in terms of number of papers and other work.” • “Not so much extra work.”

(Continued)

Continued – Table 5

What specific suggestions do you have for improving the Themed Learning Communities?

Suggestions for Improvement	N	%	Examples of Actual Student Comments
More Instructional Team Support & Communication	<u>17</u>	<u>2%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Just a little more communication between professors. It didn't seem like anyone was talking.” • “Teachers need to communicate more about the projects.” • “Grade the same.”
More Information	<u>15</u>	<u>2%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Include more material (topics).” • “Integrate nanotechnology into all of the classes.” • “More exploring actual engineering.”
Improve Course and Theme Linkages	<u>5</u>	<u>1%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Better college preparation for SLA.” • “Only put people w/ major in TLC into them I didn't belong in the political science TLC.” • “Better learning community.”

Notes: The remaining responses were so varied that no major themes emerged. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole. (N) indicates the number of student responses included in analysis; percentages (%) are based on the number of question respondents. (*) indicates a sub-code of the larger thematic category; numbers in parenthesis (N) are based on the total number of respondents.

References

- Andrade, M.S. (2008). Learning communities: Examining positive outcomes. *Journal of College Student Retention*, 9(1), 1-20.
- Indiana University Purdue University, Indianapolis. *Themed learning communities*. Retrieved October 1, 2014 from: <http://tlc.iupui.edu>
- Pike, G. R., Kuh, G. D., & McCormick, A. C. (2011). An investigation of the contingent relationships between learning community participation and student engagement. *Research in Higher Education*, 52(3), 300-322. <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs11162-010-9192-1>
- Zhao, C. & Kuh, G.D. (2004). Adding value: Learning communities and student engagement. *Research in Higher Education*, 45, 115-138.