

Institutional Research and Decision Support (IRDS)



Key Highlights

- 78% of respondents indicated that their TLC helped them work well with others who differ from them (with regard to religious beliefs, gender, ethnicity, cultural background, race, etc...) either much or very much.
- During their TLC, 79% of students reported they often or very often explored topics directly related to the theme of your TLC, while 76% reported they often or very often actively discussed complex issues and ideas.
- 23% of students indicated that being comfortable with their peers and friends contributed most to their learning.
- The number one aspect respondents liked was making friends (36% of comments).
- Nearly a quarter of respondents selected a Themed Learning Community because it related to their major/career (26%).
- Almost 30% of comments suggested that respondents least liked aspect of their TLC experience was the lack of collaboration, communication, and organization between instructors/professors in linked courses.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Jessicah Rauch
Institutional Research Coordinator
jtrauch@iupui.edu

Chelsey Skipton
Graduate Assistant

2017 Themed Learning Community Questionnaire Report

Executive Summary

The IUPUI Themed Learning Community (TLC) experience is a semester long cluster of courses linked together by a theme for beginning students. The program allows students to build close friendships with peers and make connections with faculty. In the TLC, students explore a central theme with experiences in and out of the classroom, forming connections between classwork and their life experiences. The themes focus on many different interdisciplinary areas and students are able to choose from themes that may include discovering a major/career or deepening their understanding of their major.

The questionnaire was designed to enhance understanding of students' perceptions of their Themed Learning Community experience (e.g., if the courses improved the students' ability to transition to college, form connections with faculty members and other students, apply knowledge gained in courses to broader community or social issues, and if instructional team members were committed to promoting an environment that respects and celebrates diversity). The questionnaire also allowed students to respond to open-ended questions the aspects they liked the most and least about their TLC experience, and how their TLC contributed to their learning.

Results from both the quantitative and qualitative analysis suggested that the Themed Learning Community experience helped students in their transition to college and in developing interdisciplinary thinking skills. More specifically the TLC program helped students work well with diverse others, consider issues from multiple perspectives, develop a better understanding of complex real world issues, and made it easier for them to make friends. Additionally, instructional team members were committed to promoting an environment that respects and celebrates diversity

Results suggested that the TLC experience contributed to integrative thinking and engagement (97% of students reported completing a graded assignment that required integrating ideas, strategies, or skills; 81% reported participating in a campus activity as part of their TLC; and 67% participated in an extended service learning activity). Nearly 80% of respondents indicated they were either satisfied or very satisfied with their Themed Learning Community experience. Also, seven in ten respondents indicated they are significantly likely to return to IUPUI for the next academic year.

Themed Learning Community Student Survey Responses Quantitative Report

Themed Learning Communities (TLC) are designed to help beginning students make a successful transition to college and set them up for future success in classes. The respondents were asked about the extent their TLC helped them in different areas, how often they engaged in certain behaviors and how effective their instructors and mentors were.

- 78% of respondents indicated much/very much that their TLC helped them work well with others who differ from them (with regard to religious beliefs, gender, ethnicity, cultural background, race, etc...).
- Three-fourths (76%) of students felt they formed one or more friendships that they will maintain after the semester.

Please indicate how much your experience in the Themed Learning Community helped you...								
	N	Mean	Not at all	Very little	Little	Some	Much	Very much
Percentages								
Work well with others who differ from me (with regard to religious beliefs, gender, ethnicity, cultural background, race, etc...)	387	5.11	1.6	1.0	2.8	16.8	34.9	42.9
Form one or more friendships that I will maintain after the semester	388	5.08	2.8	1.8	4.9	14.2	27.3	49.0
Consider problems and issues from multiple perspectives/point of view (ethnic, racial, cultural, religious, etc.)	389	4.94	2.3	2.6	4.9	17.2	34.7	38.3
Apply what I learned in one course to another course in my learning community	388	4.91	1.5	2.8	6.2	19.8	32.0	37.6
Feel connected with other IUPUI students	389	4.85	2.6	2.6	5.9	20.6	33.4	35.0
Develop a better understanding of complex real world problems or issues	388	4.84	2.1	3.4	5.9	20.1	34.8	33.8
Feel a sense of belonging at IUPUI	390	4.80	2.3	4.1	6.2	19.7	34.1	33.6
Understand connections between different disciplines and courses	389	4.77	2.1	2.6	6.4	23.9	35.5	29.6
Apply knowledge gained in learning community courses to broader community or social issues	389	4.76	2.6	4.4	8.7	18.0	31.6	34.7
Apply course concepts to my own life experiences	389	4.75	3.1	3.3	6.4	21.6	33.4	32.1
See myself as part of the IUPUI community	390	4.74	2.6	4.4	7.4	20.3	33.1	32.3

1=Not at all, 2=Very Little, 3=Little, 4=Some, 5=Much, 6=Very much

* Rank ordered by means

- During their TLC, 79% of students reported they often or very often explored topics directly related to the theme of your TLC, while 76% reported they often or very often actively discussed complex issues and ideas.

During your TLC how often did you:

	N	Mean	Never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Percentages						
Explore topics directly related to the theme of your TLC	389	3.26	1.8	19.3	30.3	48.6
Actively discuss complex issues and ideas	389	3.15	3.3	20.8	33.4	42.4
Work collaboratively with other students on a project, assignment, or activity	390	3.07	2.3	25.1	35.6	36.9
Explore complex issues or problems by connecting ideas from multiple classes or disciplines	389	3.05	4.6	22.1	37.3	36.0
Exchange ideas with a student whose views were different from your own	390	2.95	4.1	28.2	35.9	31.8
Discuss ideas from the TLC courses with peers outside of class	390	2.90	8.2	26.7	32.3	32.8
Discuss course topics, ideas, or concepts with a faculty member outside of class	389	2.59	15.9	33.7	26.0	24.4

1=Never, 2=Sometimes, 3=Often, 4=Very often

* Rank ordered by means

- Overall students felt the instructional team members had respected both their social identities (92% much/very much) and their diverse perspectives (89%).

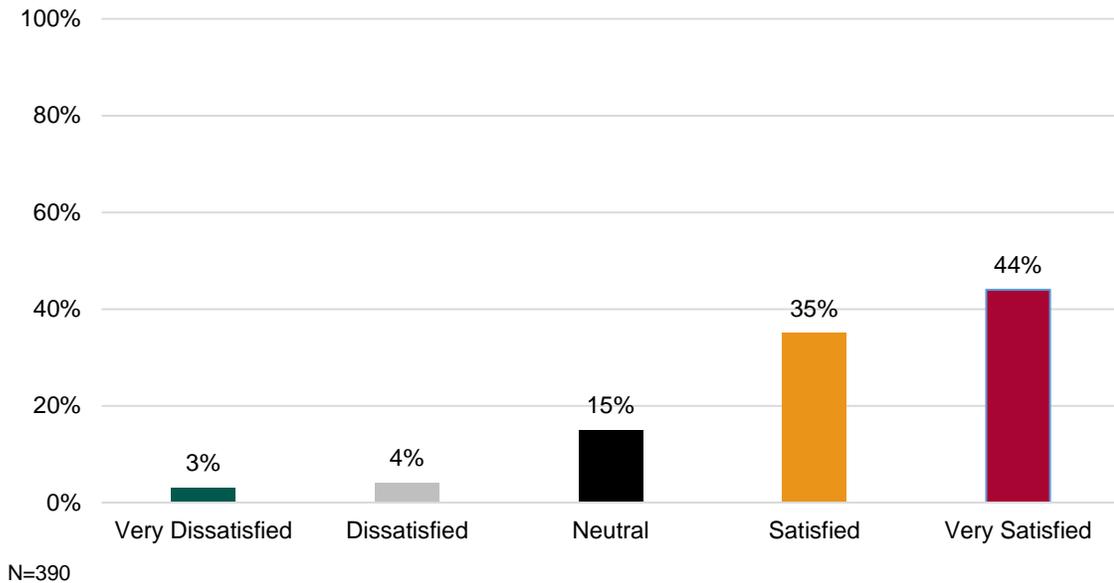
My instructional team members:

	N	Mean	Not at all	Very little	Little	Some	Much	Very much
Percentages								
Respected me and my social identities (religious beliefs, gender, race, sexual orientation, and others)	388	5.54	0.0	0.5	1.8	5.9	27.1	64.7
Had respect for diverse perspectives and identities (religious beliefs, gender, race, sexual orientation, and others)	389	5.49	0.3	0.3	2.3	8.5	24.9	63.8
Were committed to promoting an environment that respects and celebrates diversity	388	5.34	0.5	0.5	4.4	9.5	29.4	55.7
Encouraged me to think about problems and issues from multiple perspectives/points of view (ethnic, racial, cultural, religious, and others)	387	5.33	1.0	0.8	3.9	10.3	26.1	57.9
Made intentional efforts to welcome me	389	5.24	0.3	1.8	4.4	13.9	26.5	53.2
Went out of their way to support me to succeed academically	387	5.05	1.6	3.4	6.5	15.0	24.8	48.8

1= Not at all, 2=Very little, 3=Little, 4=Some, 5=Much, 6=Very much

* Rank ordered by means

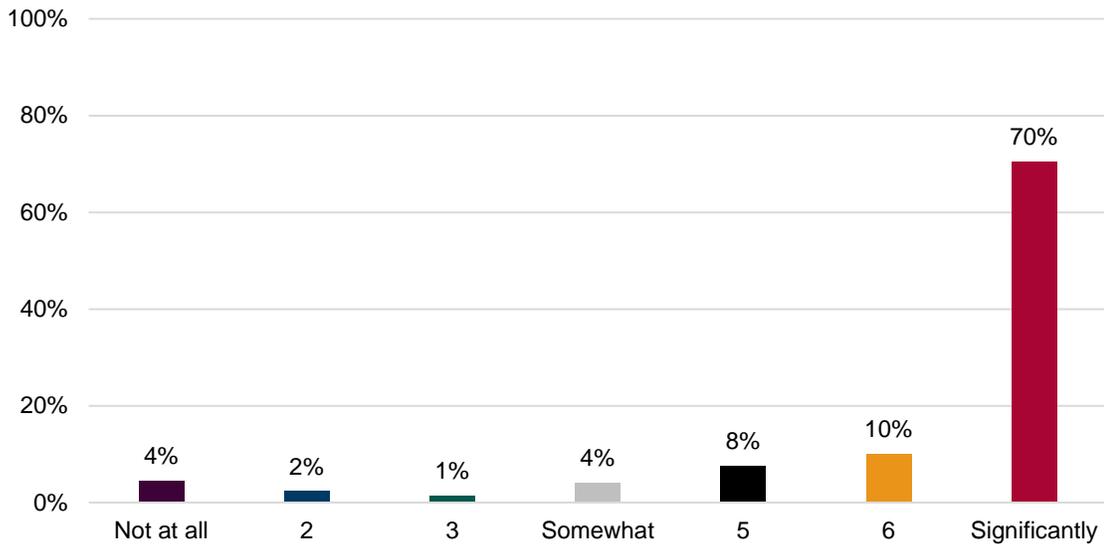
Overall How Satisfied Were You With Your TLC Experience?



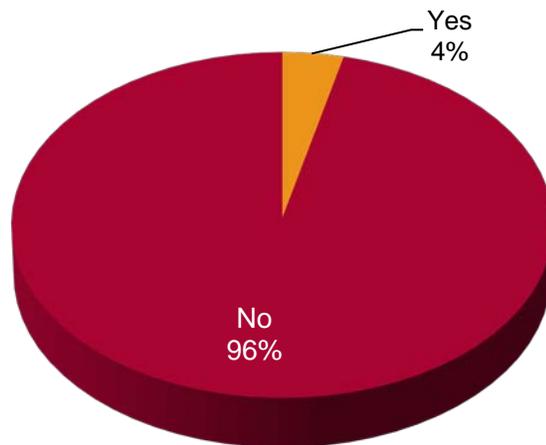
- 97% of students reported completing a graded assignment that required integrating ideas, strategies, or skills, while 81% reported participating in a campus activity as part of their TLC.
- One-third of students reported that during their TLC there was not one time that all of their instructors met together with the students.

As part of your TLC did you:			
	N	Yes	No
Assignments/Participation/Experience		Percentages	
Complete a graded assignment (paper, project, speech, etc.) that required integrating ideas, strategies, or skills from the classes included in this TLC	389	97.4	2.6
Participate in a community service or volunteer activity	387	68.2	31.8
Participate in an extended service learning activity	387	67.2	32.8
Participate in a campus activity (for example: a speaker, film, or workshop on campus)	389	80.7	19.3
Participate in an activity or event in the Indianapolis community that did not involve service (for example: festivals, museum exhibitions, etc.)	385	63.4	36.6
As part of your TLC, was there at least one time during the semester:			
When all the instructors from all your TLC courses met together with TLC students	389	66.6	33.4

For the Next Academic Year, How Likely Is It That You Will Return to IUPUI?



Are You Under 18 Years Old?

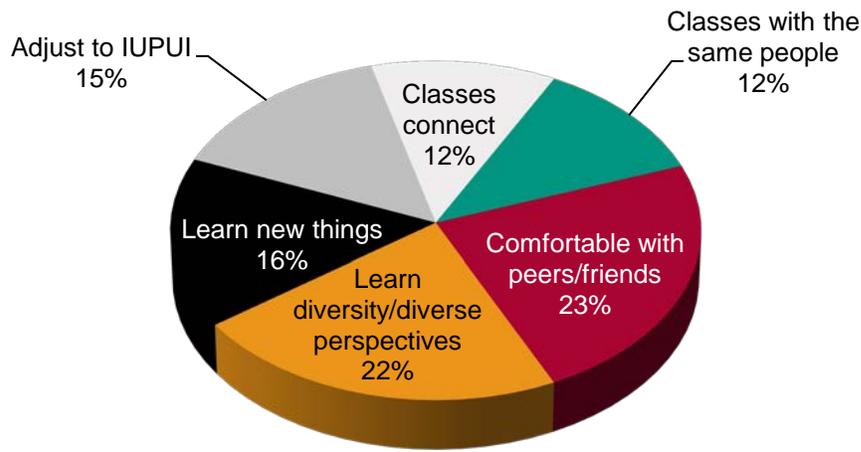


Themed Learning Community Student Survey Qualitative Report

How TLC Contributed To Your Learning

In addition to the forced-choice questions, students were asked a series of open-ended questions. The first of these questions focused on how their TLC contributed to their learning. 23% of the students reported that being comfortable with their peers and friends contributed most to their learning. Many of the students stated that by being comfortable it allowed them to ask questions that they may not have if they were not as comfortable, in turn furthering their learning. Another almost fourth (22%) of the comments indicated they learned about diversity and diverse perspectives.

Please Describe How Your TLC Experience Contributed To Your Learning?



Top 5 N=189 (two themes tied at #5)
Total N of Comments=279

Themed Learning Community Contributed To Learning

Comfortable with peers/friends

- “Helped me connect with people and made new friends.”
- “It helped me gain friendships and those friendships allowed me to get help from fellow classmates.”
- “I made friends and that allowed me to ask questions about course work.”
- “More comfortable talking to peers (which is a lot for an introvert).”
- “It helped me feel more comfortable with talking to students and instructors even if I didn’t know them very well.”

Learn diversity/diverse perspectives

- “My TLC helped me to become more aware of the issues around me and all around the world and how to look at them with an anthropological perspective so we can identify and find ways to do something about the problem.”
- “I learned a lot about implicit biases and about understanding of myself and other diverse cultures and upbringings.”
- “The TLC allowed me to see different perspectives.”
- “It taught me about different cultures and experiences that would have not even crossed my mind and different perspectives to one issue.”
- “The TLC helped me open my mind to other perceptions and how different people face oppression.”

Learn new things

- “It contributed to my learning because it helped me realize things that I didn’t quite know before.”
- “Overall, I have been taught a ton of stuff about a variety of different things. My TLC has given me too much knowledge by teaching me in a lecture setting but also by giving me hands on experience.”
- “My TLC helped contribute to my learning by teaching me skills I need to get through college for the next 4 years.”
- “My TLC experience contributed to my learning by taking these classes and learning different skills in each and increasing my learning behaviors in a good way.”

- “My TLC experience helped me learn by preparing me for this year and the years to come. I learned a lot for college that I did not know prior to the course.”

Adjust to IUPUI

- “It helped me adjust to IUPUI.”
- “It helped me transition into college.”
- “My TLC helped me adjust to college and learn about opportunities at IUPUI..”
- “My TLC experience helped me ease into the college scene by giving me helpful tips, information about stuff happening on campus, and helping me make friends more easily.”
- “I learned about college in general and how to adjust well.”

Classes connect to each other

- “I was able to connect different aspects of each class and put them together for other classes.”
- “Allowed to apply each class to other assignments within the course.”
- “I was able to link it together with a lot of my TLC classes and some of the things I learned was I used in other classes or clubs outside of the TLC.”
- “I was able to effectively connect knowledge to three different courses and to critically think to do so.”
- “Helped see how different classes can come together and face the same situations.”

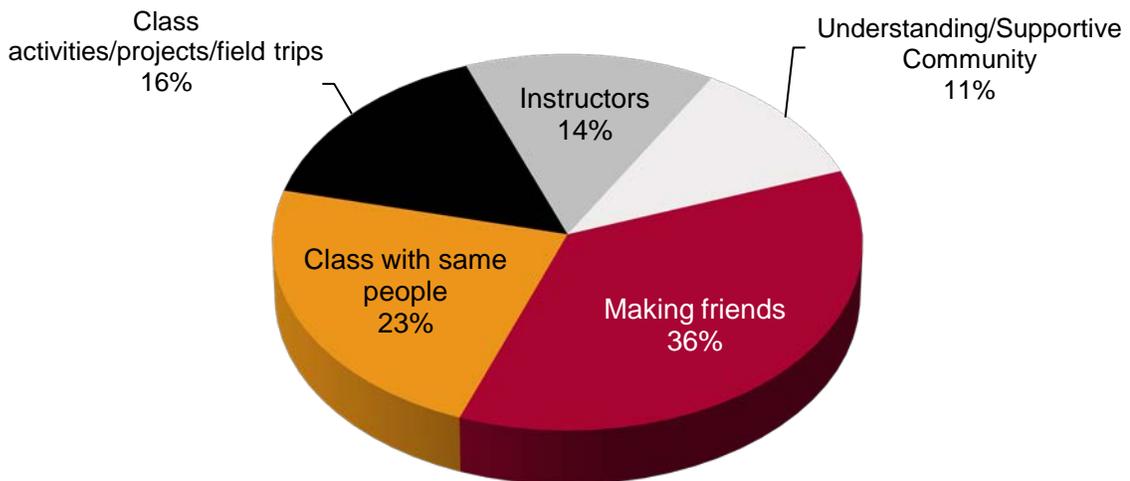
Classes with the same people

- “It was nice to have classes with all the same people, it made it easier to figure out questions because your friends have the same project that you do.”
- “I was able to connect with my peers a lot more than in normal classes being that I was with them for three different classes. This allowed me to become more comfortable in my classes and create a better learning experience.”
- “Being in the same classes with the same people helped to provide different ideas to the same topics. It helped to broaden my insight in different areas.”
- “What helped the most was having people from the same class to ask questions if you didn’t understand something the teacher said.”

Most Liked Aspects about Themed Learning Community

The respondents mentioned numerous different aspects they liked the most about their Themed Learning Community but the number one aspect they liked was making friends (36% of comments). 23% of the comments indicated having the same students in three of their classes was the aspect they liked the most. These respondents felt having the same students in multiple classes meant that they did not have to try as hard to make friends and they would start off the school year with a built in friend group that had interests close to their own.

Please Describe What You Liked Most About Your TLC Experience?



Top 5 N= 266
Total N of Comments=291

Most Liked Aspects about Themed Learning Community Example Comments

Making Friends

- “I loved meeting new friends.”
- “What I liked most about the TLC was the ability to make new friends quickly and having an easy transition from high school to college.”
- “I liked being able to connect with people of different interests and meeting new friends because they are now my really close friends.”
- “What I liked most about TLC was being able to meet new people that had the same interests that I do and also being able to make friends.”
- “I was able to make a lot of friends.”
- “What I liked most about TLC was meeting new people.”

Class with Same People

- “I loved that my TLC peers and I were always together. It made me feel more secure knowing that I had others in my classes who were also starting college.”
- “I liked being with the same people for most of my day. I was a nice and easy way to make friends.”
- “I liked having the same kids in each class. It was nice because you got to meet people and form friendships with everyone in class because we saw each other three times a day and twice a week.”
- “I liked that I met people and saw them several times during the week. It made it easier to get to know them.”
- “I liked being in a classroom with the same people.”

Class Activities/Projects/Field Trips

- “I loved the service learning project we got to do!”
- “The field trips to Eli Lilly and research laboratories to help us picture our future opportunities.”
- “I liked all of the field trips we took, especially ones to the garden.”
- “I loved doing service activities on and off campus and learning about how broad topics and issues are incorporated in our city.”
- “The activities were my favorite part of the experience.”

Instructors

- “I absolutely loved my teachers. They were both so fantastic, helping me understand what was being taught and really seemed to care about their students.”
- “The instructors were very fun and knowledgeable and made class very fun.”
- “I liked the teachers.”
- “What I liked most about TLC was being able to have a professor that taught me not only neuroscience but also how to be the best student I can be. She is a model professor here at IUPUI.”

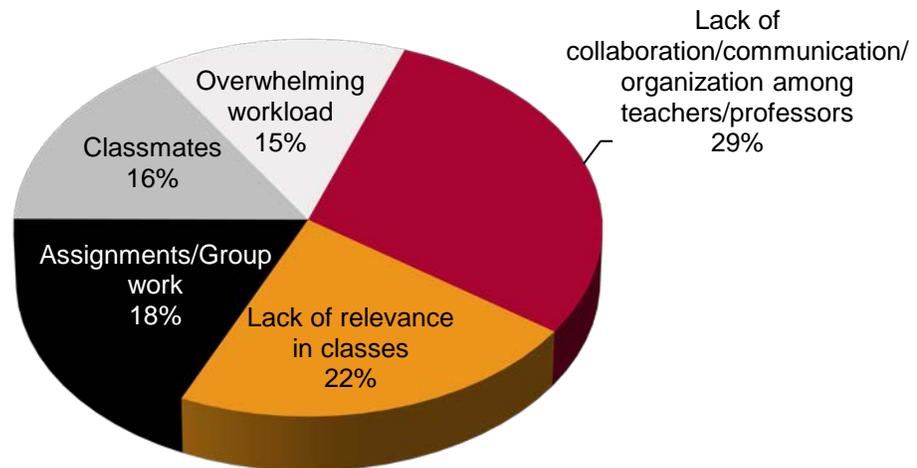
Understanding/Supportive Community

- “I liked how friendly my professors were and they were very understanding of life getting in the way sometimes.”
- “I thought it made students feel very comfortable in the sense that they are open about how they feel about teaching.”
- “I truly felt like I was in my own community and felt like I was treated like family.”
- “I liked the family atmosphere.”

Least Liked Aspects about Themed Learning Community

Almost 30% of comments indicated the respondents least liked aspect of their TLC was the seemingly lack of collaboration among the three classes and their instructors. The second least liked aspect mentioned in the comments was the lack of relevance the students felt the class had. 22% of comments indicated the lack of relevance and most of those comments would specifically mention the lack of relevance to their major or the pointless activities done in the class.

Please Describe What You Liked Least About Your TLC Experience?



Top 5 N=138
Total N of Comments=169

Least Valuable Aspects of Themed Learning Community Example Comments

Lack of collaboration/communication/organization among teachers/professors in linked courses

- "What I least liked about the TLC experience was that it appeared the professor chose favorites in the class."
- "My only complaint was that sometimes my teacher was a little unorganized in her lesson plans and it was hard to understand when things were due or what the requirements were for all of her assignments."
- "The teachers weren't always on the same wavelength"
- "We had one teacher that kind of ruined the experience. She seemed to make little effort to collaborate with the other teachers in the TLC and didn't work well with students in general."
- "I didn't like how there was one professor in our TLC that obviously did not communicate with the other two professors."

Lack of relevance in classes

- "I least liked how I dreaded going to these classes simply because I felt like they were not actually benefitting me."
- "I thought some of the things we had to do in our first year seminar were pointless such as the reflections."
- "My least favorite thing was that these classes don't apply much to my majors."
- "What I liked least about TLC is that in some ways I believed that some parts of the classes did not contribute to material for my specific major."
- "I felt that at times the day we met for our TLC was not always very beneficial and not a good use of time."

Assignments/Group work

- "I did not like the group activities because it made it hard to get together outside of class."
- "I didn't like that we had a research paper and a lot of group work, we didn't get to pick our group."
- "I dislike how with the final project we were provided very little guidance into what we were supposed to do."
- "I least liked how our teams were assigned so late. I had already made friends with other people, but if the groups were assigned earlier I could have made better friends with them."

- “Sometimes projects were unclear and limited my creativity.”

Classmates

- “Some classmates thought they were top notch, but they were just arrogant.”
- “Making a concerted effort to get along with students who are vulgar and unnecessarily loud and rude.”
- “My least favorite part of TLC was when the classmates would gang up on their peers because they had different views.”
- “There were a few students I didn’t really get along with because of their demeanor and their attitude. It’s hard to work with them because of the way they treat me and a few others in class.”
- “Having classes with all the same people.”

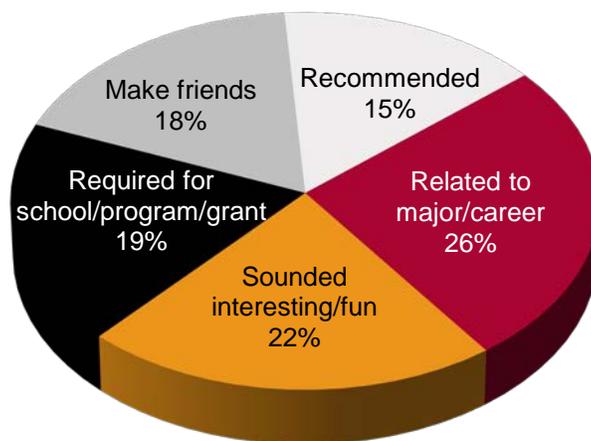
Overwhelming workload

- “The workload was pretty hectic.”
- “The work load. I was extremely overwhelmed at first.”
- “The classes were rather a lot of work.”
- “All of the papers from the teachers were due around the same time.”
- “The beginning threw a lot at you.”

Why Enrolled In a Themed Learning Community

Nearly a quarter of respondents selected a Themed Learning Community because it related to their major/career (26%). 22% of comments indicated students enrolled in their TLC because it sounded interesting/fun.

Please Describe The Reason Why You Enrolled In A Themed Learning Community?



Top 5 N= 264
Total Comments N= 360

Why Enrolled In a Themed Learning Community Example Comments

Related to major/career

- “I chose the TLC because it was related to my major.”
- “I chose this TLC because I have a great interest in Neuroscience.”
- “I heard about it and the classes fit into my major.”
- “Also, this TLC best fit into the types of classes I needed to take to complete requirements for my major.”
- “I chose Biomedical Engineering because I want to help people in the future be able to do things (walk, pick up objects, etc.) they had given up on being able to do.”

Sounded interesting/fun

- “Because it went along with my interests.”

- “I choose the TLC because I thought it would be more fun than a traditional FYS.”
- “I saw it at orientation and thought it sounded interesting and different from the other TLCs.”
- “I chose this TLC because politics is my only practical interest.”
- “I thought it would be fun.”

Required for school/program/grant

- “I had to for my grant.”
- “I enrolled in a TLC because it was required.”
- “I had to enroll due to the Pledge Grant.”
- “I had no choice because I was a 21st century scholar and part of the school of liberal arts.”
- “It was mandatory.”

Make friends

- “I wanted a way to meet other people in my major easily.”
- “I thought it would be an easy way to connect with other students interested in the same major.”
- “I thought it would be a good way to build connections with students and professors.”
- “It sounded like a good idea to meet new people that have similar interests.”
- “I had been thinking about enrolling in one since I have a hard time making friends.”

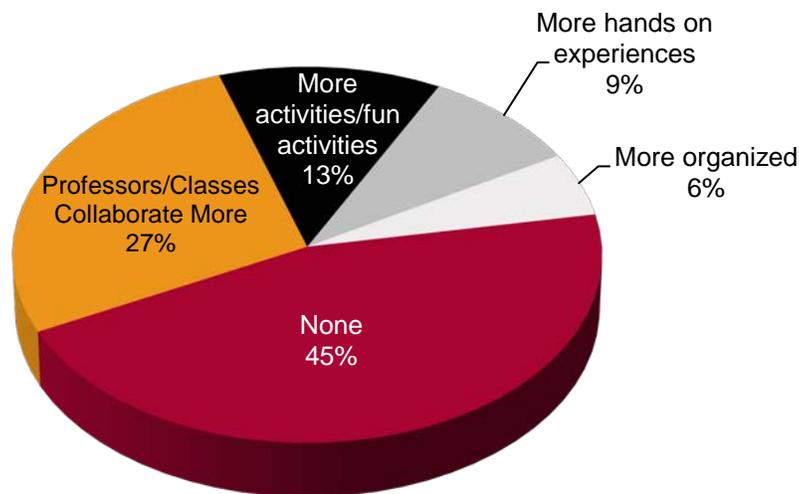
Recommended to me

- “It was recommended”
- “To be honest, the advisor who was with us at registration pushed it.”
- “I chose this TLC because the FYS professor was my advisor when I was enrolling in classes and I thought I would like having her as a teacher.”
- “It was encouraged at my orientation to sign up for a TLC.”
- “They talked it up at orientation.”

Suggestions for Improving Themed Learning Community

Nearly half (45%) of all comments indicated the students did not have any suggestions for improvement. They all enjoyed their experience and didn't see anything that needed to be changed.

What Specific Suggestions Do You Have For Improving The TLC?



Top 5 N= 114
Total Comments N= 204

Suggestions for Improving Themed Learning Community Example Comments

None

- "I don't have any specific suggestions."
- "Nothing that I can think of specifically."
- "I do not have any suggestions for bettering the TLC. I overall think very highly of this type of classroom education."
- "None, the TLC is working very well."

Professors/Classes collaborate more

- "For teachers to communicate with one another."
- "Coordinating the classes better so that we aren't repeating similar assignments (e.g. requirements to volunteer, presentations)."
- "I would require the TLC teachers to meet together at least a few times before and during the semester to discuss the direction of the class, how the students are doing, and maybe how to do something differently if something that they are doing is not working for the students. There was an obvious disconnect between one of the teachers and the other two."

More activities/fun activities

- "More fun activities."
- "I would have the TLC go around campus together as a group, and go to campus events that are during the class time frame."
- "To have more activities or services to do as a class."

More hands on experiences

- "Going out and doing more things. We took a trip to the state house and have had a few speakers, but more would be nice."
- "Try to get more experience in the teaching field because there was only one time where we got to visit a school out of our entire TLC classes."
- "More field trips!"

More organized

- "Make it more organized and put together"
- "Having a little more structure."
- "Become more organized."