

Engaging Agriculture Students Through Living Learning Communities



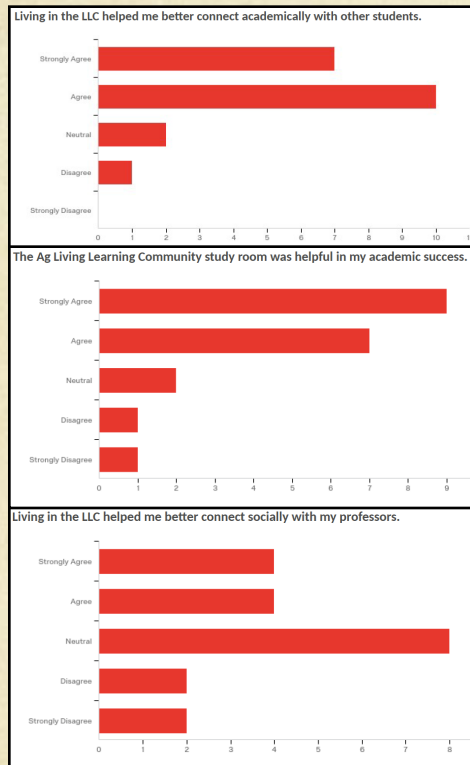
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ABSTRACT

Living Learning Communities (LLC's) enhance educational experiences for college students. LLCs have been shown to increase student's academic and social engagement, ultimately leading to positive educational outcomes. The use of residential dorms to connect students in common degree programs allows universities to develop targeted educational opportunities for students, increasing the student engagement to their chosen degree and the academic department. While LLCs have been utilized for many years, their use in agriculture programs is limited. During the Fall 2016 semester, the College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences at the University of Tennessee at Martin initiated an Agriculture Living Learning Community in a dormitory with 56 students. The new initiative required a coordinated effort among multiple campus entities, including housing, academics, administration, and faculty. The LLC was equipped with newly furnished study rooms, media equipment, and common area. Students had 24/7 access and some faculty held office hours and study sessions in the LLC. The university intends to determine the effectiveness of the LLC. A survey was conducted to assess student perceptions of the effectiveness of the LLC and help improve future programming. Student responses were positive with 70% of students stating that the LLC improved their academic experience. Eighty-five percent of students indicated social and networking experiences were improved by participating in the LLC. Students also expressed more connection to their academic major from the experience. One negative found was that only 40% of students felt that they were better connected to the faculty as a result of the experience.

Student LLC Academic Experience Perceptions



What is a living learning community?
 A living learning community (LLC) is an environment where students with shared academic majors or lifestyle interests can live together and collaborate.

Connect with Other Students

- Positive connections
- Social and academic impacts
- Sharing common areas and academic pursuits can build friendships.
- Activities in the shared space that build community among students: study sessions, movie night, guest speakers, etc..

Future Plans

- Increase programming centered around careers and study sessions.
- Sponsor student organization nights at the LLC.
- Host food events at LLC.



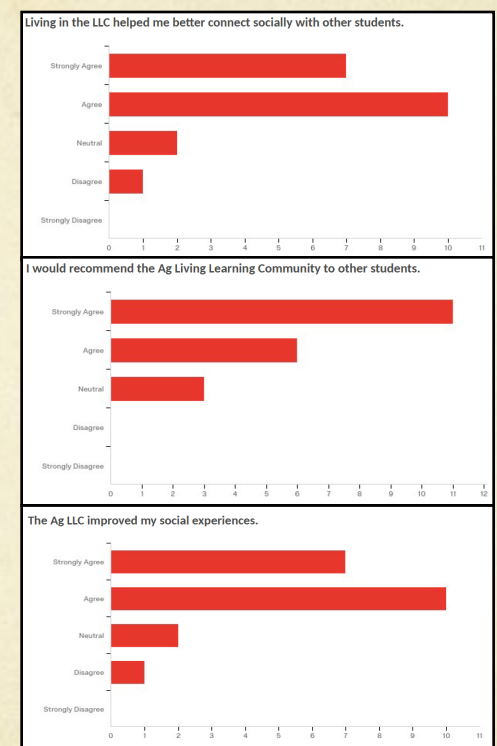
Faculty connections need to be improved through the LLC.

- The plan for next year is to increase the number of faculty who hold office hours at the common room of the LLC.
- Work to develop more faculty buy-in of the process.
- We are early in the process and this will require a culture change.

Key Take Away:

Anything that encourages studying, interpersonal associations, and campus connections can be considered a success. The findings indicate that the LLC was largely beneficial for students both academically and socially.

Student LLC Social Experience Perceptions



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