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# A Nice Place to Live and Work: A Mixed-Methods Case Study of a Residential Life Living-Learning Community and Employment Model at a Top-Tier Midwestern University

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by

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A Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University

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School of Education

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Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work here at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree here or elsewhere.

Full Legal Name: Justin Paul Linsenmeyer

Signature:  Date: 11-3-17

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## Abstract

Colleges and universities worldwide are competing with one another to provide undergraduate students with top-tier learning experiences to increase and retain enrollment. Many institutions are developing living-learning communities to maximize non-academic learning, promote social development, and facilitate interactions among students, faculty, and staff. This study was a mixed-methods, single case study of a living-learning program at a top-tier, Midwestern university. The purpose of this study was twofold: to explore the effectiveness of an undergraduate residential living-learning community at a top-tier university in regards to student satisfaction and interaction, and to investigate elements of staff job satisfaction and long-term retention of housekeeping and mechanic employees. Data collection involved surveys, one-on-one interviews, and focus group interviews of key stakeholders. Three research questions informed the purpose of the study. The first research question asked whether the living-learning model provided an environment that encouraged learning and personal growth. Both the qualitative and descriptive findings supported that yes, the model does encourage learning and personal growth, but that there is still room for improvement, especially by contributing to students' social development. The second research question asked whether the higher level of staffing among stakeholders resulted in a greater sense of safety, security, and satisfaction. Again, both the qualitative and descriptive findings supported that the model does so effectively, especially for housekeeping and mechanic employees. The third research question asked whether the model supported job satisfaction and long-term retention among housekeeping and mechanic employees. The surveys of these employees indicated that yes, the living-learning model, and especially

having a permanent building assignment, contributed to job satisfaction and retention. To improve the program in the future, assessment should recognize housekeeping and mechanic employees as stakeholders in the living-learning community; the physical space should be continually and strategically updated to meet the mission and goals of the program; housekeeping and mechanic staff should be recruited and retained strategically. In order to ensure future prosperity, program leaders should continue to assess how effectively the mission and goals are being met.

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# Chapter One: Introduction

## Background

The competition to recruit and retain exceptional students is greater now more than ever. From this competition, universities have been forced to evolve rapidly to keep up with student demand in curricula, technology, housing, and social opportunities. Diversified student populations, cutting edge technology, new facilities with a wide variety of amenities, and a wide-range of student programs and opportunities are only a few of the expectations of present day students at top-tier universities.

Colleges and universities around the country and world are competing with one another to provide undergraduates with a top-tier living-learning experience to increase and retain enrollment. Some institutions require staff and faculty to live and work on campus side-by-side with students to promote a safe living and learning environment outside the classroom. Integrated living of faculty and staff with students aims to create community between varying cultures, increase student involvement within residence halls and the university, foster a unique and interactive learning environment between students and faculty, as well as promote a safe living-learning community where students are encouraged to explore new opportunities with student organizations. Educating undergraduate students holistically provides a seamless learning environment: "Experiences in various in-class and out-of-class settings, both on and off the campus, contribute to learning and personal development" (American College Personnel Association [ACPA], 2016, para. 3).

For decades, university administrators have struggled with the ability to attract, retain, and provide quality living and learning experiences for undergraduate students.

The Study Group on the Conditions of Excellence in American Higher Education's (1984) *Involvement in Learning: Realizing the Potential of American Higher Education* reported colleges and universities across the nation were failing to realize their potential in undergraduate education and offered practical steps for fulfilling the promise of excellence in higher education. This has been proven year after year by the increased enrollment of undergraduate students, the steady decline in retention of students, and the rise in outstanding student loans.

The burden of student loan debt topped by entering the workforce without a degree can impact graduates and dropouts for decades. Is this high cost worth it? Boyer's 1987 assessment of American higher education was consistent with the consensual criticisms of higher education and challenged administrators to reinvent students' undergraduate experience.

According to Lenning and Ebbers (1999), "Everyone [seemed] to agree – students, parents, employers, politicians among them – that undergraduate education in this country must improve dramatically" (p. 1). During the 1990s, numerous criticisms and recommendations were offered for reinventing undergraduate education experiences with an emphasis on student learning (American Association for Higher Education, 1998; American College Personnel Association, 1996; Astin, 1993; The Kellogg Commission, 1997; American Association for Higher Education, American College Personnel Association, and National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, 1998; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Administrators have acknowledged the need for change in the undergraduate living experience but many are constrained by a lack of resources.

In 2012, there were 71 universities with greater than a one-billion-dollar endowment in the United States (National Association of College and University Business Officers, 2012). However, there were approximately 6,700 degree-granting colleges and universities in the United States as of 2011 (United States Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). By having smaller endowments and or limited amounts of state funding, many colleges and universities are simply unable to keep pace with top-tier universities nationwide in terms of amenities offered.

At the end of fiscal year 2014, over 100 colleges with the largest endowments accounted for nearly $400 billion, or about three-fourths of the national total (United States Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016). Competition for state and federal funding becomes rapidly higher among the rest of the institutions in the United States. According to Carnevale, Johnson, and Edwards (1998), "Tennessee was the first state to link appropriations for public colleges and universities to performance, in 1979, when the state's higher-education commission began the program as a way to improve undergraduate education" (para. 9). Many states followed suit and began looking for new methods to facilitate student learning and increase retention in their undergraduate programs.

**Development of Learning Communities**

Due to the increased interest in improving undergraduate experiences on campus, administrators began seeking ways to expand the learning environment outside of the classroom. One area of interest for many universities was creating or building upon learning communities on their campuses.

Learning communities can take on many different forms and be called a variety of names such as dorms, dormitories, campus houses, halls of residence, resident halls, and including but not limited to residential colleges. Even though learning communities can be structured in a variety of ways, appear differently from university to university, be titled differently around the globe, and have a wide array of staffing structures, a common definition is offered by Gabelnick, MacGregor, Matthews, and Smith (1990), who, over 20 years ago, wrote *Learning Communities: Creating Connections Among Students, Faculty, and Disciplines.* According to Gabelnick et al. (1990), learning communities "purposefully restructure the curriculum to link together courses or coursework so that students find greater coherence in what they are learning as well as increased intellectual interaction with faculty and fellow students" (p. 5).

Tinto (1999) called for colleges and universities to make learning communities "a hallmark of the first-year experience. Simply put, involvement matters and at no point does it matter more than during the first year of college when student attachments are so tenuous and the pull of the institution so weak" (p. 6). Over the last several decades, many colleges and universities directed their focus to engage students inside and outside the classroom with the anticipation of increased learning, satisfaction, and retention of both students and staff via leaning communities through campus housing arrangements and expanded residential life programs.

Exceptional educational opportunities, cutting edge amenities, and a caring group of faculty and staff coexisting in a well-structured living community are factors that may facilitate student involvement, leading to a lower retention rate and higher fiscal solvency. As stated by Levitz, Noel, and Richter (1999):

> Student retention is the primary gauge for collectively assessing the success – defined much more broadly than just academic success-of students, and therefore of an institution. Retention, then, is not the primary goal, but it is the best indicator that an institution is meeting its goal of student satisfaction and success. (p. 31)

According to Levitz et al., "Research indicates that by reducing the number of freshman dropouts by a single student, a four-year institution will, on average, 'save' $15,000 to $25,000 in gross revenue over four to five years" (p. 48). With many top-tier universities housing thousands of upper-class students each semester, revenue can continue to grow annually by attracting and retaining an increasing number of undergraduate students.

It has been well documented that retention and student involvement are interrelated (Astin, 1975, 1977, 1982, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1987). According to Astin (1985), student involvement is defined as the "amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience" (p. 134). As the research site's Dean of Students acknowledged: "our redevelopment goals [of residential life] were generated by wanting to encourage more undergraduates to stay on or near campus longer, so as to establish a stronger sense of community and therefore a stronger sense of tradition" (McClain, personal communication, 2006). Campus living and learning communities can provide opportunities for all genders and cultures from varying religious backgrounds a platform to expand their quest for knowledge outside the classroom and into their day-to-day lives.

According to Pascarella, Terenzini, and Blimling (1994), residential living during college is "consistently one of the most important determinants of a student's level of involvement or integration into a various cultural, social, and extracurricular system of an institution" (pp. 25-26). Existing research supported that, compared to commuter students, students who live on-campus are significantly more likely to be involved in campus activities and make use of the institution's facilities (Billson & Terry, 1982; Chickering, 1974; Everett, 1979; Foster, Sedlacek, & Hardwick, 1977; Pascarella, 1984). Also, prior studies supported that undergraduate students living on campus have a significantly higher level of campus involvement, succeed at a higher level academically, and have retention rates that are 10 to 20% higher than students living off campus (Durrington & Bacon, 1999; Johnson & Romanoff, 1999; Minor, 1997; Schroeder, Minor, & Tarkow, 1999).

**History of the Living-Learning Program at the Research Site**

In an effort to improve student housing, the research site's Provost's Office established the Undergraduate Council (UGC) in October 1995 to implement the recommendations of the Task Force of Undergraduate Education (Washington University in Saint Louis, 2013). The task force was created to explore and discuss all aspects of the undergraduate experience at research site in an effort to improve advising, exam scheduling, communications, student housing, and facilities.

Based on the recommendations made by the Task Force Report on Undergraduate Education (1994) and the Student Affairs Project 21 Report (1995), key changes have taken place in the housing operations (Washington University in Saint Louis, 2017e). The program has since evolved such that there are now ten residential colleges and three

residential communities. A residential college is made up of two or three buildings; each college is home to approximately 300 students and provides communal spaces to study and socialize. In contrast, a residential community is made up of apartment and suite-style buildings; these facilities are typically larger and foster more independence (Washington University in St. Louis, 2017d).

The mission statement of the program is to "provide a safe environment that encourages learning and personal growth in an inclusive community that empowers and challenges our residents" (Washington University in St. Louis, 2017d). It is guided by three principles. These include: Live, which encompasses principles regarding student lifestyles, communities, and values; learn, which addresses both personal and intellectual development; lead, which promotes student involvement and leadership (Washington University in St. Louis, 2017d).

The program is housed within the study site's Office of Residential Life and Student Affairs Office. All residential communities have a Resident College Director (RCD) who works closely with Resident Advisors (RAs), Faculty Fellows (FFs), college council representatives, as well as at least one dedicated mechanic and housekeeper for each residential college building. Figure 1 provides an illustration of the current organizational structure of the Office of Residential Life and partner Student Affairs Offices.

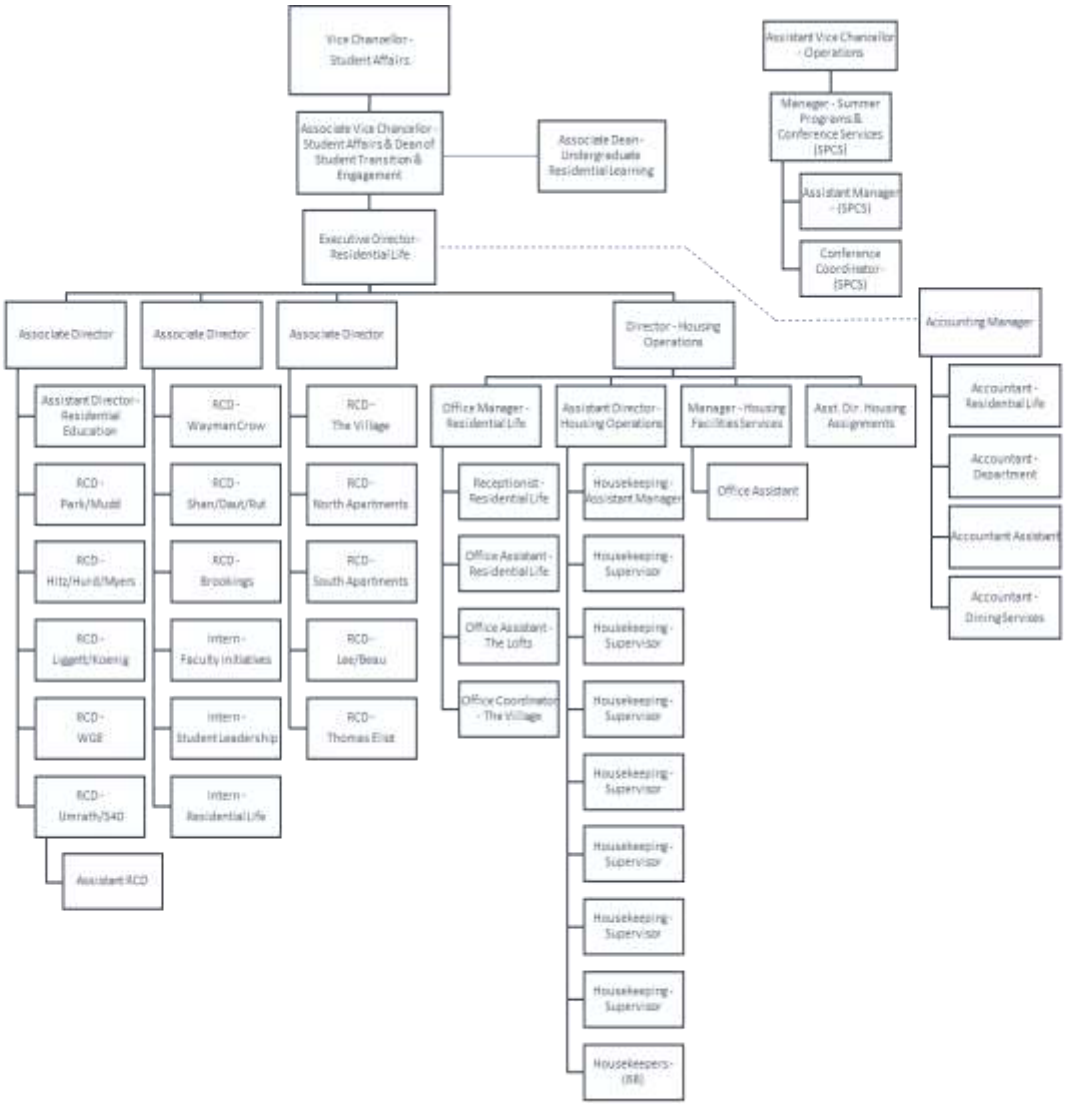


*Figure 1.* Student affairs and student transition and engagement. Office of Residential Life organizational chart, current staffing structure (J. Markowski, personal communication, September 28, 2016).

The vice chancellor, deans, directors, and staff of the Office of Residential Life are focused on fostering student learning outside the classroom while encouraging students' personal growth and development. All residential life staff must promote a strong sense of community among students, foster meaningful interactions between students and faculty outside the classroom, as well as encourage traditions, customs, and

rituals that are unique to each residential community. One of the most unique aspects of the research site's living-learning community model is the encouragement by top level leaders of all stakeholders, from housekeepers and mechanics to RCDs and FFs, to participate in students' lives as well as to enhance the undergraduate experience both inside and outside the classroom.

This unique residential environment ensures each incoming first-year student will have a RCD and FF living in their residential community. Also, each residential college has a permanent mechanic and housekeeper assigned to their building. Each student is afforded this luxury until they choose to move off campus for their second, third, and or fourth-year of undergraduate studies. The research site guarantees housing for all students during their undergraduate studies. By purposely surrounding students with faculty and staff outside the classroom the research site seeks to establish a clean, safe, and secure environment conducive to developing strong and healthy social relationships.

The research site's living-learning community model is also designed to be highly favorable with housekeeping and mechanic staff. Housekeeping and mechanic staff are permanently assigned to residential colleges with the intent of fostering a sense of stability and belonging to the residential community, a safe and secure environment of students, and ownership of the space to which they are assigned.

However, if living-learning community models such as the one described at the research site are going to offer long-term success for students socially, the university financially, and the staff emotionally, assessment data should be collected regularly to determine areas of prosperity as well as opportunities for improvement. Developing student housing and expanding learning communities on campuses nationwide have

morphed from a breakeven or loss-model in to a billion-dollar business. Thus, the effectiveness of these programs must be analyzed often to adjust to students' evolving priorities and interests. The remaining sections of this chapter will provide a statement of the research problem, purpose and research questions, definition of terms, and methodology of this study.

**Statement of the Problem**

A comprehensive analysis of the living-learning community at the research site has yet to be conducted since its inception over 20 years ago. Although existing research supported the effectiveness of living-learning models in supporting student involvement, no studies have investigated their impact on long-term retention of staff. Thus, in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the research site in supporting student satisfaction, engagement, and retention, as well as long-term retention of faculty and staff, a comprehensive analysis of the research site's living-learning community model is warranted.

**Purpose and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study is twofold: to explore the effectiveness of an undergraduate residential living-learning community at a top-tier university in regards to student satisfaction and interaction, and to investigate elements of staff job satisfaction and long-term retention of housekeeping and mechanic employees. Thus, the research questions underlying this study are:

1. Does the integrated living-learning community model at the research site provide an environment that encourages learning and personal growth?

2. Does the higher level of staffing and personalized interactions between students, staff, and faculty within the residential living-learning community model translate to a greater sense of safety, security, and satisfaction of stakeholders within the residential colleges?
3. Does the integrated living-learning community model at the research site create an environment that promotes job satisfaction and long-term retention among housekeeping and mechanic employees?

**Importance of the Study**

Numerous studies have been conducted examining first-year retention and grade-point average increases and decreases (Baker & Pomerantz, 2001; Lenning & Ebbers, 1999; Tokuno, 1993), student satisfaction (Bergstrom, 1999; Johnson & Romanoff, 1999; Schroeder et al., 1999) and freshman involvement at college (Pike, Schroeder, & Berry, 1997). However, no study has been conducted providing a comprehensive analysis of residential living-learning community models at top-tier institutions examining undergraduate student satisfaction and achievement linked to quality of facilities and amenities offered, social interactions and community involvement, Residential Life staff and faculty interaction within the residential halls, as well as the impact of relationships developed with mechanic and housekeeping staff within student living-learning communities. In addition, no study has been conducted linking employee satisfaction and long-term retention to a traditional residential living-learning community model by ensuring day-to-day interaction between student and staff via permanent position placement of mechanics and housekeepers creating a strong sense of community within a residential living environment at a top-tier university.

Therefore, this study offers administrators at the research site a comprehensive evaluation of the satisfaction of students, successes and failures of advancing university learning community goals, as well as future trends of the learning communities created by the Office of Residential Life for undergraduate students. Additionally, this study offers new contributions to the literature by uncovering and discussing critical factors leading to job satisfaction and long-term retention of housekeeping and mechanic staff within the residential living-learning communities at the research site. The results of this study will describe the impact dedicated housekeepers and mechanics have within each residential college on employee and student satisfaction as well as safety and security within their living-learning community environment. Lastly, assessing meaningful interactions between students and faculty outside the classroom, strengths and weaknesses of cohort living communities, faculty fellow integration of resident halls, the impact of capital infrastructure development, as well as the impact of mechanic and housekeeping staff's indefinite placement within each building in each residential college expands upon the notions identified by Astin (1996) as information used to enhance student learning.

## Delimitations and Limitations

### Delimitations

1. This study is a single case study design that utilized one research site. The research site was a private, not-for-profit, non-religious Midwestern university. Its Carnegie classification was as a four-year, large, highly residential doctoral university with the highest level of research activity.

2. This study investigated one program at the study site: The residential living-learning model. Since its inception in the mid-1990s, this program has evolved such that there are now ten residential colleges and three residential communities. A residential college is made up of two or three buildings; each college is home to approximately 300 students and provides communal spaces to study and socialize. In contrast, a residential community is made up of apartment and suite-style buildings; these facilities are typically larger and foster more independence (Washington University in St. Louis, 2017d).
3. The population of this study consisted of nine different stakeholders or groups of stakeholders. Three administrators were included: The Dean of Students, the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Residential Learning, and the Director of Residential Life. Five groups of faculty or staff stakeholders were included, namely the Faculty Fellows (FFs), Resident College Directors (RCDs), Resident Advisors (RAs), and housekeeping employees and mechanic employees. The final group of stakeholders included was comprised of sophomore-level undergraduate students.

**Limitations**

1. Only sophomore-level students were included in the population for this study. Their experience may be somewhat different from freshmen or upperclassmen students, especially given that students are not required to live on-campus after their freshmen year.

2. Participation in this study was voluntary and therefore provided a convenience sample. Thus, the findings may not be characteristic of the entire population of stakeholders at the study site.
3. Different methods of data collection were used for different populations of this study. Qualitative interview based methods were used for the administrators, FFs, and RCDs; descriptive survey-based methods were used for the RAs, students, and housekeeping and mechanic employees. As a result, the findings between or among all population groups cannot be compared in a side-by-side manner.

**Definition of Terms**

*Academic Involvement:* The degree to which an undergraduate student reports involvement with academic activities such as time spent doing homework per week.

*Academic Progress:* Refers to an undergraduate student's progress towards earning a degree as indicated by the number of credit hours earned at the end of the first or second year in the program.

*Academic Success:* Refers to three (3) indicators of academic success including: first-term grade-point average, accumulative grade-point average (GPA), and academic progress.

*Faculty Fellow (FF):* Refers to any faculty member living in a Residential College.

*Formal University Involvement:* Includes activities such as participating in intramural sports and time spent per week participating in student clubs and or organizations.

*Housekeeper Employee:* Refers to persons cleaning public and or private spaces within the Residential Colleges that participated in this study.

*Informal University Involvement:* Includes time spent socializing, conversing with peers of foreign cultures, and time spent interacting with faculty and staff within the Residential College.

*Involvement with Faculty:* Described by Astin (1993) as including measures such as being a guest in a professor's home, working on a professor's research project, assisting faculty in teaching a class, and hours spent talking with faculty outside of class.

*Involvement with Peers:* The extent to which a student reports involvement with student peers, as described by Astin (1993). Involvement with peers is comprised of formal and informal involvement in this study.

*Involvement with Staff:* The extent to which a student reports involvement with RCD's, mechanic employees, and housekeeping employees such as being a guest in a RCD's home, and daily communication with mechanic and housekeeping employees within residential halls.

*Long-Term Retention:* Refers to whether or not an employee spent five or more years of employment in the same position consecutively without promotion.

*Mechanic Employee:* Refers to persons maintaining public and or private spaces within the Residential Colleges that participated in the study.

*Medium-Size University:* Refers to a public or private college registering 5,000 to 15,000 students offering undergraduate housing and education as well as graduate and post-graduate degree programs.

*Preadmission Characteristics:* Refers to academic characteristics of the student that were present prior to enrollment at the university, including ACT composite score (or SAT equivalent converted from concordance table) and high-school percentile rank.

*Residential Advisor Participant (RA):* Refers to any Resident College Advisor who participated in the researcher's study.

*Residential College:* Refers to an organizational pattern for a division of a university that places academic activity in a community setting of students and faculty, usually at a residence and with shared meals, the college having a degree of autonomy and a federated relationship with the overall university.

*Residential College Director (RCD):* Refers to any Resident College Director who participated in the researcher's study.

*Residential Living-Learning Community Model:* Refers to a learning community program in which undergraduate students live in a particular building or complex called a Residential College where they can share interests, backgrounds and worldviews, study in large and small groups, and grow personally, socially, and academically.

*Social Involvement:* The degree to which an undergraduate student reports involvement with social activities such as time spent participating in clubs, athletics, or school organizations per week.

*Student Satisfaction:* Refers to the extent to which an undergraduate student indicates satisfaction with her/his choice in attending the university, the rating of quality of instruction at the university, the rating of quality of facilities at the university, the rating of quality of dining services at the university, the rating of social involvement

opportunities at the university, and the rating of quality of mechanic and custodial staff within the residential college(s) at the university.

*Top-Tier University:* Refers to universities ranked in the top-25 (U.S. News & World Report, 2014) awarding bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees as well as producing pioneering research in one or more fields.

**Organization of Study**

The researcher organized this study into five chapters. Chapter One is an overview and background of the topic being investigated. It includes the background of the study, statement of the problem, research questions, the importance of the study, delimitations and limitations of the study, and definition of terms used in the study.

Chapter Two contains a review of literature providing a historical prospective of learning communities as well as analysis and discussion of the available research on the outcomes of living-learning community models. Chapter Three contains details of the methodology including the purpose and research questions, research design, site and program description, population, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis. Chapter Four contains data analysis of the results of the researcher's findings providing tables and figures to support the data collected. Chapter Five contains a summary of the results of the researcher's study, an interpretation of the data collected, as well as recommendations for practical implementation and expansion of the research site's living-learning community model.

**Summary**

Colleges and universities around the country and world are competing with one another to provide undergraduates with a top-tier living-learning community experience

to increase and retain enrollment. Some institutions have developed living-learning communities where staff and faculty live and work on campus with students to cultivate a strong community outside the classroom.

The living-learning community model being investigated for the purpose of this study was established in the mid-1990s, but has yet to undergo a comprehensive analysis of its effectiveness since its inception. Also, the program at the study site is unique in that provides permanent building assignments for its housekeeping and mechanic employees. Thus, the purpose of this study is twofold: to explore the effectiveness of an undergraduate residential living-learning community at a top-tier university in regards to student satisfaction and interaction, and to investigate elements of staff job satisfaction and long-term retention of housekeeping and mechanic employees.

The findings of this study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on living-learning communities at colleges and universities. Given that no studies have investigated employee satisfaction and long-term retention of staff; this study will provide foundational knowledge in this under-researched area. Lastly, the findings of this study will provide administrators with a comprehensive analysis with the program, which may be used in future quality improvement efforts.

# Chapter Two: Literature Review

## Introduction

This chapter discusses key research in living-learning community models and outcomes associated with living-learning community participation in undergraduate programs. Background information on this topic is first provided to understand the history of living-learning communities and to establish rationale for their existence in higher education institutions. Second, an overview of five traditional living-learning community models is presented followed by a discussion of residential living-learning communities in the 21st century. Third, the researcher presents a discussion of the benefits of living-learning communities and then an examination of the available evidence linking living-learning community participation to outcomes in student involvement, student satisfaction, academic success, student persistence, as well as the effects the living-learning community model has on employee job satisfaction, morale, and long-term retention. As a conclusion of the chapter, the researcher offers a detailed description of the research site's Residential Life living-learning community model and the effects the model has on students and staff.

## History of Learning Communities

Alexander Meiklejohn is known to be the creator of the living-learning community concept who in 1927 established the Experimental College at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Possibly the first attempt at structuring a formal living-learning community model was Meiklejohn's Experimental College which organized the first two years of undergraduate studies into a society "built on principles of connected and integrated learning" (Shapiro & Levine, 1999, p. 18). Meiklejohn challenged traditional

approaches to undergraduate education, which were usually characterized by separate curriculums by department and deliberately streamlined them to overlap so that students would intersect regularly.

It is widely recognized that Alexander Meiklejohn was a pioneer in higher education administration with his work on developing structured living-learning communities. However, John Dewey and Joseph Tussman also contributed to the evolution of undergraduate student development in higher education campuses across our nation.

According to Shapiro and Levine (1999), Dewey viewed education "as a purposeful, student-centered process that required a close relationship between student and teacher" (p. 17). Dewey's suggestion of faculty and student relationship development outside the classroom is a critical component in the research site's Office of Residential Life living-learning community model today. Joseph Tussman was also instrumental in creating the foundation for modernized learning communities. Tussman's reform of undergraduate education in the form of the Experiment at Berkeley (1965-1969) was his attempt at creating curriculum "within programs that would unite faculty and students in distinct communities" (Johnson & Romanoff, 1999, p. 385).

Pioneering the living-learning community movement through their research and reform, Meiklejohn, Dewey, and Tussman paved the way future researchers such as Gabelnick et al. to write the most widely accepted definition of a living-learning community in 1990, *Learning Communities: Creating Connections Among Students, Faculty, and Disciplines*:

> A learning community is any one of a variety of curricular structures that link together several existing courses – or actually restructure the curricular material entirely – so that students have opportunities for deeper understanding and integration of the material they are learning, and more interaction with one another and their teachers as fellow participants in the learning experience. (p. 19)

There were five significant curricular models for living-learning communities described by Gabelnick et al. (1990) including: linked courses, learning clusters, freshman interest groups, federated learning communities, and coordinated studies. Almost a decade later, Lenning and Ebbers (1999) offered a broader classification of learning communities which included: curricular learning communities, classroom learning communities, residential learning communities, as well as student-oriented learning communities (i.e. accelerated learning programs). Lenning and Ebbers included the five models of learning communities identified by Gabelnick et al. in his study and expanded on earlier work by researcher Tokuno (1993) that learning communities "can be categorized into high-level, middle-level, or low-level positions along each of the five dimensions: student collaboration, faculty collaboration, curricular coordination, shared setting, and interactive pedagogy" (p. 9).

**Linked Courses**

Linked courses are typically identified as a foundation of a living-learning community. The linked courses model "involves pairing two courses and listing them in the class schedule so that a specific cohort of students co-registers for them" (Gabelnick et al., 1990, p. 20). Many institutions, according to Smith (1991) stated that colleges often look to connect a substantial general education course with a smaller elective type

course such as English composition with public speaking. Similarly, paired courses or linked courses describe a situation where two instructors teach together in the same classroom.

Lucas and Mott (1996) further described loosely linked courses where instructors teach individually but my coordinate syllabi and or assignments. The research site does utilize link or loosely link models in their learning communities. Additionally, the research site's Office of Residential Life group first-year undergraduate students together in residential living-learning communities by ensuring students from similar degree and scholarship programs live in the same residential colleges and progress through their program tracts as a cohort.

**Learning Clusters**

Learning clusters add one or two additional courses to a cluster making it a substantial part of the student's schedule. A three-course or four-course cluster may speak to a common theme or topic and at times there may be interaction among faculty members (Smith, 1991). Additionally, some clusters or blocks of classes, may be merged into one extended class taught by the same instructor. An example of this type of structure can be found at Lindenwood University, located in St. Charles, Missouri. Lindenwood University offers evening cluster programs for adult education called Accelerated Degree Program (ADP), which is taught using the Socratic Method emphasizing student interaction (Lindenwood University, 2013).

The research site does not offer learning cluster programs for undergraduate students but they do encourage Socratic Method of learning within residential colleges. Undergraduate students work through studies during their first year of schooling living in

an on-campus environment that promotes student, staff, and faculty interaction on a daily basis.

**Freshman Interest Groups**

Freshman interest groups (FIGs) model represents another type of learning common community approach used by large public institutions, according to Lucas and Mott (1996). This model is usually centered on a pre-major topic or theme (Smith, 1991). The FIGs model, suggested by Gabelnick et al. (1990), is particularly appropriate for large institutions because it does not require faculty to make significant pedagogical changes. Lucas and Mott (1996) reported that FIGs exist at large institutions, such as the University of Oregon, the University of Hawaii at Manoa, Illinois State University, Michigan State University, North Carolina Appalachian State University, Temple University, Eastern Washington University, Washington State University, and the University of Wisconsin.

**Coordinated Studies**

The coordinated studies model most directly resembles the earliest living-learning community models described by Meiklejohn and Tussman. Coordinated studies programs interdisciplinary approach is the most radical restructuring of the traditional curriculum (Gabelnick et al., 1990). Similarly, Smith (1991) stated that "coordinated studies discard the notion of four-credit courses in favor or a curriculum of fully integrated sixteen-credit programs that last a full quarter or an entire year" (p. 45). These traditional approaches to learning in the classroom may help students learn as a unit in the classroom but the research site's residential living-learning community model focuses

on creating a living-learning environment conducive for social bonding, academic learning, and cultural development inside the residential colleges.

## History and Development of the Residential Life Living-Learning Community Model at the Research Site

**Dorm-style living space**. Early dorm-style buildings were designed to separate students from the outside campus, providing privacy for classes and introspection. Windows and doors usually faced and opened inside towards courtyards and the exterior walls of buildings tended to be blank furthering the monastic style of living. Natural light was not of importance inside the dorms and the visibility of brick and concrete was abundant in mid-century and pre-mid-century dormitories.

Isolated and cold, student dorm rooms were not meant to be their primary source for studying and the buildings were not designed to foster co-mingling. Most dormitories were housed mostly by men only up until the 1960's and were sparsely furnished with a simple bed, desk, and dresser. Many of the dorm rooms were doubles, triples, or even quads with bunked beds to save space. Rather than in-room kitchen or bathroom space, each floor had a single large community restroom facility and kitchen shared by all living on the floor. Each floor also offered a study lounge which may also be used as a dining space.

College campuses of the 19th and up to the mid-twentieth centuries focused learning around classroom and library facilities rather than inside dorm rooms. In the early twentieth century, the research site staffed less than 100 professors serving approximately 1,500 local men and women. Over 100 years later the research site staffs

over 3,000 professors and more than 6,000 undergraduate students. Housing facilities at the research site have dramatically changed during that time.

*Suite-style living space*. The shift from dorm-style to suite-style living has evolved rapidly over the last 20 to 30 years. Currently, the research site's residential areas include ten residential colleges and three residential communities. Residential colleges are made up of two or three separate buildings, called residential halls, which form a single living-learning community. Residential communities, located in neighborhoods near to campus, are larger, more independent, and house upper-class students. Each residential college houses approximately 300 undergraduate students featuring social lounges, study rooms, computer labs, recreational rooms, and prayer rooms. Many off-campus residential communities feature flat screen televisions, granite kitchen countertops, and floor to ceiling windows.

The goal of all residential areas is to promote a strong sense of community among students living in the living-learning community area, encourage personal development, foster meaningful interactions that extend the reach of the classroom, and to encourage traditions, customs, and rituals that are unique to each residential college.

The research site's suite-style rooms typically house two people per room but they also offer single, triple, and even quadruple rooms as well. Suite-style rooms offer a common lounge area connecting two, three, or even four bedrooms in the shared living space. A bathroom is also shared between a single student and up to four is living in the suite. Present day suite-style living-learning facilities are designed to be diverse and gender inclusive with the intention of creating a social environment that welcomes and

includes all students regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity expression, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, ability, religion, and or national origin.

**A shift toward residential living-learning communities on campus**. The most significant and possibly impactful development in the evolution of living-learning communities has been the addition of a residential component to the curricular models of linked courses, learning clusters, first-year interest groups, and coordinated studies. Daie (1995) viewed this movement as a rediscovery of the concept of integrated studies as well as the residential college and traced the roots of residential living-learning communities to the long-standing tradition of an integrated academic and social life, such as those of Harvard University, Yale University, and Rutgers University, based on the effective British "college" model.

Through the success of the British's model, top-tier universities in the United States have been able to slowly innovate and reform the undergraduate living-learning experience on campus. This relatively newer approach to creating living-learning communities on campus attempts to marry the powerful potential of the residence hall environment to the benefits of the learning community structure to create a tool for bridging the academic-social divide (Tinto, 1996). It also facilitates a safe and encouraging environment for students, staff, and faculty to interact and facilitate learning and growth outside the classroom.

There is a significant amount of evidence noting the impact of living in a residential college environment has on undergraduate student development. Boyer (1987) wrote that students living in residence halls have more contact with faculty members, are more involved in organized activities with peers, and "show greater gain in

artistic interests, liberalism, and interpersonal esteem that do commuters" (p. 207). Additionally, at the research site, hourly housekeeping and mechanic staff members are assigned specific building assignments that last a minimum of one year in an effort to foster interaction with custodial and mechanic employees and students. After their review of 20 years of research, *How College Affects Students,* Pascarella and Terenzini (1991), concluded that "living on campus maximizes opportunities for social, cultural, and extracurricular involvement; and it is this involvement that largely accounts for residential living's impact on student change" (p. 611). Furthermore, Astin (1993) noted that living in a campus residential hall has a significant positive impact on student involvement, student persistence, and student satisfaction with nearly every aspect of the undergraduate experience.

Numerous researchers' conclusions and recommendations have built cases for the introduction of residential college learning communities for undergraduate students. Chickering (1981) discussed an opportunity created by the establishment of residential college living communities:

> The indications clearly are that residential learning programs hold great potential for helping colleges and universities meet the developmental needs of a diverse student population in the years ahead. Realizing this potential depends largely on focusing institutional goals on students as individuals, closely coordinating academic and residential activities, and enlisting residential life staff prepared to serve as teachers of human relations and facilitators of student development. Residential learning can aid development through increasing students' self-knowledge, self-confidence, sense of self-worth, clarification of goals,

> interpersonal competence, and regard for others and the community as a whole. As a consequence, students will be better able to take full advantage of their academic programs. (p. 688)

As noted by Tinto (1999), "student attachments are so tenuous and the pull of the institution is so weak" (p. 6) within their first year, the freshman class at the research site is required to live within the residential colleges on campus and interact daily with their peers, staff, and faculty in a purposeful effort to create a culture of learning within a safe and secure environment.

Possibly the most significant and impactful research that may have sparked the surge in residential living-learning communities over the last two decades is *Realizing the Educational Potential of Residence Halls* by Schroeder, Mable, and Associates (1994). Pascarella et al. (1994) stated in their chapter "The Impact of Residential Life on Students," that even though residential colleges have an opportunity to make significant contributions to undergraduate education, they often fail to reach their full potential. Pascarella et al. called for residential colleges to be "transformed into living-learning centers" with academic learning as the focus.

The Office of Residential Life at the research site has taken that initiative a step further by assigning housekeeping and mechanic staff a minimum one year building assignment, permanent if the employee chooses, to increase students' satisfaction of living quarters, promote communication between staff and students, and increase accountability of maintaining living spaces by students and staff. Magolda (2016) adds:

> Custodians, like waitresses, prefer independence and are fiercely protective of their autonomy. Custodians prefer for supervisors to make explicit their

> expectations and allow them space to get the job done independently, with minimal management interference. These cleaners desire insularity and autonomy when interacting with management, but not with the individuals they serve (p. 82).

Additionally, the research site enlisted RCDs up to three years of residential college living terms and FFs up to six years of residential college living terms in an effort to promote day-to-day interaction with students outside the classroom.

Similar to Pascarella et al., Schroeder, Mable, and Associates (1994) stated residential colleges should be used to reinforce and enhance classroom learning. The Office of Residential Life at the research site encourages the FFs, RCDs, and the RAs to offer first-year and second-year students a number of opportunities to participate in social engagements that strengthen bonds within their residential colleges but also helps foster cultural respect and understanding.

**Benefits of Living-Learning Communities**

Living-learning communities at colleges and universities across this country take on a variety of names and may take on different forms as well; however, they all are designed with the same goal in mind. The main function of every living-learning community model, regardless of name or form, is to foster an inclusive learning and social environment for students outside the classroom. According to Evenbeck and Williams (1998), the goal of any residential learning community "is to replicate those personal relationships [we value so highly from our own experience] and – by extension – to provide access to resources that will lead students to fall in love with learning" (p. 36).

The resurgence and rapid expansion of the residential living-learning communities' movement in the 1990s is one way administrators sought to address the public's concerns and restore trust in higher education by "removing structural barriers endemic to many colleges and universities that often impede effective teaching and learning" (Johnson & Romanoff, 1999, p. 385). It also can be a revenue generating mechanism as well as a tremendous marketing tool used to market their programs and facilities to prospective students worldwide. Bruffee (1999) argued that first-year students' social connections rarely come from their classes. He went on to say that many upper-class students are more established in their program making it easier for them to form relationships; however, first-year students do not find it as easy to make friends in their programs and even harder to establish relationships outside their programs.

Lucas and Mott (1996) cited the following as ways in which living-learning communities can achieve institutional goals and produce desirable outcomes:

1. Students understand how subjects and issues are interrelated and cross subject matter boundaries.
2. Learning communities provide an academic community for students. This sense of community helps bolster commitment and helps to stem the tide of student attrition.
3. Students become active and responsible participants in their own education. Social and academic commitment are increased which results in higher retention. Higher levels of critical thinking are encouraged.

4. Students have a greater intellectual interaction and connection with each other, faculty, and members of the outside community. The exposure to diverse populations is great.
5. Learning communities provide faculty revitalization and encourage the sharing of knowledge between faculty.
6. Learning communities provide an excellent forum to explore and understand diverse perspectives.
7. Learning communities are a pedagogical style and organizational framework that is student centered rather than teacher centered and emphasizes active student association and involvement.
8. Bringing several faculty members together to teach adds an intellectual richness to students' experience that traditional pedagogy does not. (pp. 6-7)

In summary, the literature suggested that residential living-learning communities can be of tremendous value for undergraduate students in a variety of ways. Researchers contended that living-learning communities increase undergraduate student involvement, improve student performance, and impact student retention (Levine, 1999). The research site's Office of Residential Life may have expanded on these values by increasing staffing to a semi-permanent – permanent basis within their living-learning community model.

**Student Involvement**

Astin (1975) is generally accepted as the first researcher to recognize and document the importance of student involvement as a critical component of the

undergraduate student experience. Astin (1985) defined student involvement as "the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience" (p. 134) and noted involvement may influence other aspects of the students' experiences including cognitive and affective development, satisfaction, and perseverance. A decade prior, Astin (1975) had stated that "if ways can be found to involve students more in the life and environment of the institution, their chances of succeeding in college are improved" (p. 148).

Boyer (1987) stated that "the college of quality remains a place where the curricular and cocurricular are viewed as having a relationship to each other" (p. 195). Reaffirmed the importance of undergraduate involvement Boyer (1987) noted:

> What students do in dining halls, on playing fields, and in the rathskeller late at night all combine to influence the outcome of the college education, and the challenge, in the building of community, is to extend the resources for learning on the campus and to see academic and nonacademic life as interlocked. (p. 177)

Astin (1993) identified five measures of student involvement at colleges including: academic involvement, involvement with faculty, involvement with peers, involvement with work, and other forms of involvement. According to Astin (1993), academic involvement "is positively related to nearly all academic outcomes" (pp. 375-376) including student persistence, graduating with honors, enrollment in graduate school, and all self-reported increases in cognitive and affective skills. Involvement with faculty and involvement with peers were also noted to be positively correlated with a range of academic outcomes as well as with measures of student satisfaction with the undergraduate college experience (p. 383).

Astin's (1993) research findings led him to believe that "the student's peer group is the single most potent source of influence on growth and development during the undergraduate years" (p. 398). In subsequent studies, Astin (1996) went on to offer that the three most potent forms of student involvement as a means of shaping cognitive and affective development are academic involvement, involvement with faculty, and involvement with peer groups. He asserted that "given the demonstrated importance of student involvement, one of the things we should regularly assess is how much time students devote to various activities" (p. 132).

Spitzberg and Thorndike (1992) suggested that the power of student involvement has generally been dismissed or overlooked as a means for achieving success. The researchers noted, "the potential for learning and for the experience of intellectual community that comes from engagement with the liberal arts and from substantial faculty-student and student-student interaction is rarely recognized in this country" (p. 124). According to Braxton (2000), the potential of the classroom as a vehicle for student involvement has been overlooked:

> For most students, classrooms serve as smaller academic and social meeting places or crossroads that intersect the diverse faculty and student communities marking the college generally. Membership in the community of the classroom can provide important linkages to membership in communities external to the classroom. For new students in particular, engagement in the community of the classroom can become a gateway for subsequent student involvement in the academic and social communities of the college generally. (p. 82)

The contributions made by these researchers imply the structure offered by residential learning communities may be a means through which students could bridge the academic-social gap. As noted by Tinto and Russo (1994), residential learning communities may enhance undergraduate student involvement in part because the programs allow them to "attend both social and academic needs within the context of the program" (p. 24). Over the last two decades, the discussion regarding the importance of student involvement has evolved into a national discussion about "student engagement."

In lieu of the National Survey of Student Engagement in 1999, the term "student engagement" became known and recognized as the measure of quality for which institutions should aspire. Created by a 1998 working group of the Pew Charitable Trust, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) addresses national concerns about quality in higher education and to provide incentives for improve undergraduate education. The NSSE "attempts to determine the extent to which undergraduate students engage in effective learning activities" (Marcy, 2003, para. 4).

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) uses an instrument called The College Student Report to survey undergraduate students across the nation directly about their educational experiences. The NSSE provides a means through which undergraduate student experience at colleges and universities nationwide can be viewed (NSSE, 2004, para. 7).

Zhao and Kuh (2004), using data collected from the NSSE in 2002, conducted perhaps the greatest study, in terms of sample size, of the relationship between residential living-learning community participation and deep educational experiences. From a sample size of more than 80,000 students from 365 four-year institutions, Zhao and Kuh

suggested that undergraduate students living in residential living-learning communities were "positively linked with more frequent interactions with faculty members, engaged in diversity-related activities, and benefited from having classes that emphasized higher order thinking skills" (p. 124). They were also able to note from their research that "higher levels of academic support, academic integration, and active collaborate learning" (p. 124) were found for undergraduate students who indicated experiences with a living-learning community. Another critical find of the study was the effect size for interaction between freshman students was .60. This statistic indicates that the impact of the residential living-learning community interaction between first-year students and faculty is significant (Zhao & Kuh, 2004).

Numerous other researchers have explored undergraduate student involvement as an outcome of residential living-learning community participation over the last two decades. Leonard (1996) found, as reported by Pascarella et al.'s (1994) review of research on residential learning communities, that "students in residence hall environments that were structured as learning communities had significantly higher levels of involvement in educational activities and interaction with faculty and peers" (p. 4). Similarly, the positive impact of residential learning communities on student learning, retention, improved student academic performance, as well as higher levels of student and instructor satisfaction was also noted in multiple research studies (Dillon, 2003; Knight, 2002; Scharff & Brown, 2004; Taylor, Moore, Macgregor, & Lindblad, 2003).

Additionally, living-learning community participants at the University of Michigan were found to have more frequent face-to-face interactions with faculty outside the classroom and "with the exception of intramural or intercollegiate athletics, living-

learning students were more involved in extracurricular activities that non-living-learning peers" (Taylor et al., 2003, p. 50). Leonard concluded from that research undergraduate student involvement was significant because it led to higher educational achievement. Researchers from the University of Missouri – Columbia (Schroeder et al., 1999), invested undergraduate student involvement through both an institution-specific instrument, the MU Freshman Survey, as well as the widely-used College Student Experiences Questionnaire (College Student Experiences Questionnaire Assessment Program [CSEQA], 2007).

The CSEQ is a versatile tool that assesses the quality of effort students expend in using institutional resources and opportunities provided for their learning and development (CSEQA, 2007). According to Schroeder et al. (1999), undergraduate students that participated in the residentially-based FIGs program were noted as having significantly higher levels of involvement on all three involvement scales on the CSEQ. Additionally, FIG participants were noted as having higher levels of involvement than nonparticipants in two key areas: informal interaction with faculty outside the classroom and interaction with peers.

In a similar study, researchers Pike et al. (1997) noted the residential living-learning community program at University of Missouri – Columbia "had significant positive effects on social integration and institutional commitment, after controlling for antecedent variables" (p. 616). In a later study, Pike (1999) analyzed CSEQ data from MU and added "students in residential learning communities had significantly higher levels of involvement, interaction, integration, and gains in learning and intellectual development than did students in traditional residence halls" (p. 269).

Tinto and Goodsell (1994) stated in their qualitative study of FIGs at the University of Washington, Seattle that residential living-learning community participation had a positive impact on student involvement with peers:

> First, FIGs allowed students to interact with the same group of peers across their classes. Consistently seeing the same people count not be taken for granted at this large university; consequently, this aspect of the FIG program was not trivial. Second, the consistency enabled students to form a social network in which other academic support mechanisms could begin to operate. Finally, writing link classes were a place where students became engaged with their course content through the peer review writing process. (p. 14)

In a similar study by Johnson and Romanoff (1999), the Russell Scholars living-learning community at the University of Southern Maine revealed Russell Scholars spent more free time in campus activities, which indicates a higher level of involvement with peers. There are approximately 500 student groups, organizations, and sports programs at the research site. About 75% of undergraduate students participate in intramural sports, in more than 30 all-male, all-female, and coed teams (Washington University in St. Louis, 2017).

**Student Satisfaction**

Johnson and Romanoff (1999) found in their study that participants of the Russell Scholars living-learning community program at the University of Southern Maine were significantly more satisfied with their faculty than nonparticipants and generally more satisfied with their experience at the university. Additionally, Bergstrom (1999) stated that participants in the NU Start summer residential living-learning community at the

University of Nebraska – Lincoln "expressed near-unanimous satisfaction with their experience in the residence halls and with their peers in the living-learning community" (p. 6). Baxter Magolda (1999) adds "connecting to students" lived experience means using it as a foundation from which they can explore knowledge and determine what to believe" (p. 13). An examination of these principles revealed without a commitment to change, strong collaboration, and an institutional ethos emphasizing learning outcomes students may not benefit from a living-learning community.

## Mediating Factors in Student Involvement, Student Satisfaction, Academic Success, and Student Retention

One of the most significant questions driving research on residential living-learning communities is if there is a difference in student retention rates for students that participate in a residential living-learning community model versus those who do not, such as a commuting student. The research site's Office of Residential Life has alleviated this concern by requiring all first-year students to live within their living-learning community and by also providing living spaces for all students who choose to live on campus throughout their entire undergraduate program.

## Other Studies of Living-Learning Communities Relating to Mediating Factors in Staff Retention

Researchers have studied living-learning community models, factors driving student satisfaction and retention, and impact of faculty involvement on student academics little to no data has been offered relating to mediating factors in staff retention. This study uniquely offers insight into driving factors of housekeeping and mechanic

retention as it relates to the research site's Residential Life living-learning community model.

**Summary**

This chapter explained the various types of learning communities, discussed key research in living-learning community models, and outcomes associated with living-learning community participation in undergraduate programs. Background information on this topic was first provided to understand the history of living-learning communities and to establish rationale for their existence in higher education institutions. Second, an overview of five traditional living-learning community models was presented followed by a discussion of residential living-learning communities in the 21st century. Next, the researcher presented a discussion of the benefits of living-learning communities and then an examination of the available evidence linking living-learning community participation to outcomes in student involvement, student satisfaction, academic success, student persistence, as well as the effects the living-learning community model has on employee job satisfaction, morale, and long-term retention. As a conclusion of the chapter, the researcher offered a detailed description of the research site's Residential Life living-learning community model and the effects the model has on students and staff.

This study was a mixed-methods, single case study of a living-learning program at a top-tier, Midwestern university. The purpose of this study was twofold: to explore the effectiveness of an undergraduate residential living-learning community at a top-tier university in regards to student satisfaction and interaction, and to investigate elements of staff job satisfaction and long-term retention of housekeeping and mechanic employees. The research site was characterized as private, not-for-profit, non-religious, highly

residential doctoral university with the highest level of research activity. The program being studied at this research site was a living-learning community that was established in the mid-1990s.

The population of this study consisted of nine different stakeholders or groups of stakeholders, including three high-level administrators, the FFs, RCDs, and RAs, housekeeping and mechanic employees, and sophomore-level undergraduate students. Data collection included: Surveys of the RAs, housekeeping and mechanic employees, and students; one-on-one interviews of the Dean of Students, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Residential Learning, and the Director of Residential Life; focus group interviews with the FFs and RCDs. Thus, triangulation was achieved by using multiple methods of data collection and multiple sources of data (Denzin, 1978).

Data collection occurred during the 2014 to 2015 school year. The survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistics using the Campus Labs (2017) software. The qualitative interview data was analyzed using the constant comparative method (Glaser, 2008; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The methodology of the study will be presented in Chapter Three.

# Chapter Three: Methodology

## Introduction

This chapter provides a description of the methodology of this study. The first section includes a statement of the study's purpose and underlying research question. Next is a description of the research design, site and program description, population, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis. An overall summary of the methodology concludes this chapter.

## Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was twofold: to explore the effectiveness of an undergraduate residential living-learning community at a top-tier university in regards to student satisfaction and interaction, and to investigate elements of staff job satisfaction and long-term retention of housekeeping and mechanic employees. Thus, the research questions underlying this study were:

1. Does the integrated living-learning community model at the research site provide an environment that encourages learning and personal growth?
2. Does the higher level of staffing and personalized interactions between students, staff, and faculty within the residential living-learning community model translate to a greater sense of safety, security, and satisfaction of stakeholders within the residential colleges?
3. Does the integrated living-learning community model at the research site create an environment that promotes job satisfaction and long-term retention among housekeeping and mechanic employees?

**Research Design**

This study was a mixed-methods, single case, case study design. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) defined a case study as "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single, bounded unit" (p. 232). A case study was an appropriate design for this study given its investigation into one program at one university; the bounds are further detailed in the subsequent section regarding the study's site and program description. Multiple sources of data were integrated to support the case study, including surveys of students, in-depth interviews of three administrative stakeholders, and focus groups of two different groups of staff employees; the person or groups of persons being studied is further elaborated upon in the subsequent section regarding the study's population. This case study was conducted with approval from the Institutional Review Board at Lindenwood University and the Offices of Residential Life and of Student Affairs and Conduct at the study site.

Triangulation of data within a case study can be established in four different ways. These include the use of multiple methods of data collection, multiple sources of data, multiple investigators, or use of multiple theories to interpret the study findings (Denzin, 1978). In this study, the primary methods of triangulation were the use of multiple methods of data collection, including both descriptive and qualitative data, as well as the use of multiple sources of data, namely the various persons or groups of persons identified as stakeholders. Thus, two methods of triangulation used supported the validity of this case study.

## Site and Program Description

The research site was a private, not-for-profit, non-religious Midwestern university. Its Carnegie classification was as a four-year, large, highly residential doctoral university with the highest level of research activity. The following sections provide more specific information on the students at the research site in terms of enrollment, academics, charges and financial aid, and retention and graduation rate. Information on employment of the staff is also provided, as well as a snapshot of the institution's finances regarding sources of revenue and expenses. The final section provides a description of the living-learning community that was investigated for the purpose of this case study.

## Student Demographics

**Enrollment**. In the fall of 2014, there were 14,348 total students enrolled, 52% of which were undergraduate and 48% of which were graduate students. The enrollment by race and ethnicity was 52% White, 17% nonresident alien, 14% Asian, 6% Black or African American, 5% Hispanic, 4% unknown, 3% multiracial, 0% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, and 0% American Indian or Alaska Native (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, 2016).

Of the undergraduate student body, 0.6% were enrolled only in distance education, 1.4% were enrolled in some distance education, and 98% were not enrolled in any distance education. Of the graduate student body, 1.6% were enrolled only in distance education, 0.5% were enrolled in some distance education, and 97.8% were not enrolled in any distance education. The residence of first-time degree or certificate-

seeking students was characterized as 1.7% in-state, 85% out-of-state, and 8% from foreign countries (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, 2016).

**Academics**. Regarding the academics of students at the study site, the 25th percentile of first-time degree or certificate-seeking undergraduate students in 2014 was an SAT critical reading score of 700, a math score of 720, and a writing score of 700. The 25th percentile of first-time degree or certificate-seeking undergraduate students that submitted ACT scores in the same year was an English score of 33, a math score of 31, a writing score of 8, and a composite score of 32 (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, 2016).

**Student charges and financial aid**. In terms of cost for full-time, first-degree, degree or certificate-seeking undergraduate students, the total cost of attendance for students living on-campus during the 2015 to 2016 school year was $68,751. Of this figure, on-campus room and board accounted for $15,280, or 22%, of the total fees. Of the undergraduate student body during the 2013 to 2014 school year, 49% received some form of grant or scholarship aid, and 22% were financially supported through federal student loans. Thus, the average net price of attendance for undergraduate students who were awarded grant or scholarship aid was $33,374 during the 2013 to 2014 school year (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, 2016).

**Retention and graduation**. Of the first-time bachelor's degree-seeking undergraduates in 2014, the retention rate of full-time students from first to second year was 97% of full-time students and 92% of part-time students. The graduate rates for full-time, first-time, degree or certificate-seeking undergraduate students that started in 2006

was 88% in four years, 94% in six years, and 94% in eight years (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, 2016).

**Staff Demographics**

Next, the total number of staff employed at the research site in 2014 was 13,681 individuals. Of those, 90% were full-time and 10% were part-time employees. This figure included employment in various sectors, including: 2,164 as instructional staff; 83 within research; 1,056 within public service; 82 as librarians, curators, and museum technicians; 100 as student and academic affairs; 827 within management; 966 within business and financial operations; 1,808 within computer, engineering, and science; 382 within community service, arts, and media; 1,626 as healthcare practitioners and technical services; 1,256 within service occupations; 11 within sales and related occupations, 2,204 as office and administrative support; 252 within natural resources, construction, and mechanic, and 64% within production, transportation, and material moving (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, 2016).

Three groups of staff were included in the focus groups for this study: Housekeeping employees, mechanic employees, and Residential College Advisors (RCDs). Though it is not completely clear how these employees are categorized, it is likely that the housekeeping staff were grouped with service occupations, mechanics were grouped with natural resources, construction, and mechanic, and RCDs were grouped with student and academic affairs. Thus, regarding the staff employed within service occupations, it is notable that 93% of those staff were full-time, and 7% were part-time employees in 2014. Similarly, of the staff employed within natural resources, construction, and mechanic, 98% were full-time, and 2% were part-time in that same

year. Of the staff employed within student and academic affairs, 59% were full-time and 41% were part-time employees (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, 2016).

**Institutional Finances**

Lastly, the finances of the research site are illustrated in Figure 2 and Figure 3. Figure 2 shows the percent distribution of core revenues by source during 2014. Of the total revenue, 31% were through investment return, 8% through private gifts, grants, and contracts, 14% through government grants and contracts, 11% through tuition and fees, and 36% through other core revenue. The revenue from on-campus living is likely categorized as other core revenue.

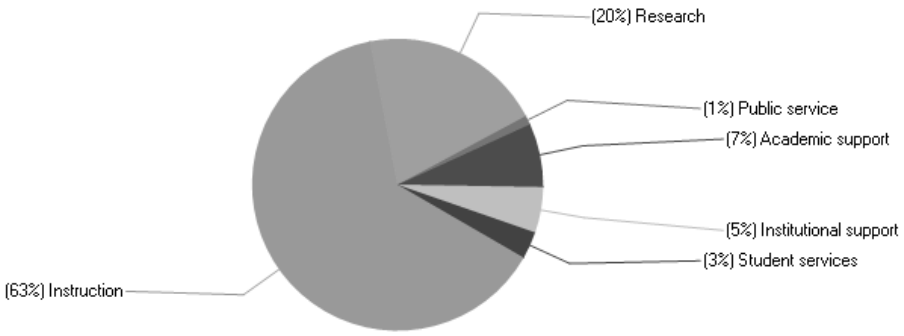


*Figure 2*. Percent distribution of core revenues, by source: Fiscal year 2014 (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, 2016).

Next, Figure 3 illustrates the percent distribution of core expenses by function during 2014. Of the total expenses, 63% were for instruction, 20% for research, 7% for academic support, 5% for institutional support, 3% for student services, and 1% for public service. The expenses for the living-learning program are likely categorized entirely or in part as academic support, institutional support, or student services.

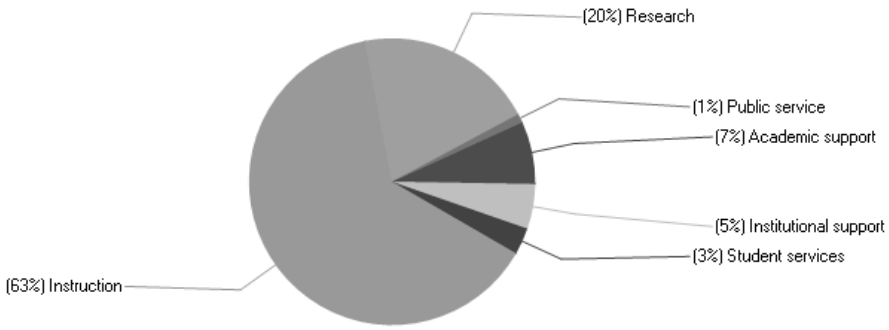


*Figure 3.* Percent distribution of core expenses, by function: Fiscal year 2014 (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, 2016).

**Program Description**

The program being investigated for this case study was the living-learning community at the research site. Its development began in October of 1995 under the guidance of a Task Force of Undergraduate Education. The task force was formed to improve various aspects of the student experience including advising, exam scheduling, communications, student housing, and facilities.

The program has since evolved such that there are now ten residential colleges and three residential communities. A residential college is made up of two or three buildings; each college is home to approximately 300 students and provides communal spaces to study and socialize. In contrast, a residential community is made up of apartment and suite-style buildings; these facilities are typically larger and foster more independence (Washington University in St. Louis, 2017d).

**Program mission**. The mission statement of the program is to "provide a safe environment that encourages learning and personal growth in an inclusive community that empowers and challenges our residents" (Washington University in St. Louis,

2017d). It is guided by three principles. These include: Live, which encompasses principles regarding student lifestyles, communities, and values; learn, which addresses both personal and intellectual development; lead, which promotes student involvement and leadership (Washington University in St. Louis, 2017d).

**Program goals**. The living-learning program at the research site is guided by four goals. These include (Washington University in St. Louis, 2017d):

1. Promote a strong sense of community among students living in the area.
2. Develop residential areas that promote students' learning and personal development.
3. Foster meaningful interactions that blend within and beyond the formal classroom setting.
4. Encourage traditions, customs, and rituals that are unique to each area.

**Program structure**. The program is housed within the study site's Office of Residential Life and Student Affairs Office. The organizational structure of the program is illustrated in Figure 1. Key stakeholders included in this case study were the Dean of Students, the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Residential Learning, the Director of Residential Life, Faculty Fellows (FFs), Resident College Directors (RCDs), Resident Advisors (RAs), housekeeping supervisors and housekeepers, and mechanics. Though not listed in this organizational chart, students were also surveyed. More specific information on each person or group of persons is provided in the subsequent section regarding the study's population.

## Population

The population of this study consisted of nine different stakeholders or groups of stakeholders. Three administrators were included: The Dean of Students, the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Residential Learning, and the Director of Residential Life. Next, five groups of faculty or staff stakeholders were included, namely the Faculty Fellows (FFs), Resident College Directors (RCDs), Resident Advisors (RAs), and housekeeping employees and mechanic employees. The final group of stakeholders included was comprised of sophomore-level undergraduate students. The following sections provide a more detailed description each stakeholder or group of stakeholders that made up the population of this case study.

## Administrators

Three administrators were included in the population of this study: The Dean of Students, the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Residential Learning, and the Director of Residential Life. The Dean of Students, also titled the Associate Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs and Dean of Student Transition and Engagement, reports directly to the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs, and oversees both the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Residential Learning and the Executive Director of Residential Life. Next, the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Residential Learning reports to the Dean of Students and oversees the Faculty Fellows (FFs) program. The Director of Residential Life, recently retitled the Executive Director of Residential Life, reports to the Associate Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs-Dean of Student Transition and Engagement and oversees three Associate Directors, the Director of Housing Operations, and the Accounting Manager.

**Faculty Fellows (FFs)**

The FFs are faculty members who live on-campus in a residential college, oftentimes with their families. They work with the RCDs and RAs to connect students with the residential college. The purpose of involving FFs is to provide students with role models, mentors, or informal advisors; promote a two-way understanding of faculty life and student life; and encourage informal contact between faculty and students. Nine faculty members held a FF position at the time of this study (Washington University in St. Louis, 2017a).

**Residential College Directors (RCDs)**

RCDs are full-time student affairs professionals who manage the daily operations of their assigned residential college or community. RCDs assist in program development and address student concerns or conduct issues. They also supervise the Resident Advisors (RAs) and Graduate Fellows (GFs), work with the FFs, and communicate any mechanic and housekeeping concerns of their assigned buildings. Thirteen RCDs were employed at the time of this study (Washington University in St. Louis, 2017c).

**Resident Advisors (RAs)**

RAs are full-time, upperclassmen students who are assigned to residential colleges and supervised by the RCDs. Their role is to contribute to their assigned communities by fostering collaboration and involvement, managing crises and responding to emergencies, and performing administrative tasks. RCDs also live in their assigned residential college and receive room and board as compensation (Washington University in St. Louis, 2017b).

**Housekeeping and Mechanic Employees**

The housekeeping employees include both housekeepers and housekeeping supervisors. There are approximately 68 housekeepers and seven supervisors employed at the research site, or 75 total housekeeping employees. Most housekeeping employees are permanently assigned to one building within a residential college for the duration of their employment.

Also, there are approximately 10 mechanic employees included in the population of this study. The mechanic employees are assigned to a permanent residential college, which may be comprised of two to three buildings. Their offices and workshops are also housed within their assigned residential colleges.

**Students**

Lastly, the final group of stakeholders who made up the population of this study were sophomore-level undergraduate students who began their academic year in the fall of 2014. The undergraduate student body at the research site was composed of 7,401 students, 48% of which were males and 52% of which were females. The racial breakdown of the total student body, including both undergraduate and graduate students, was 52% White, 17% nonresident alien, 14% Asian, 6% Black or African American, 5% Hispanic, 4% unknown, 3% multiracial, 0% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, and 0% American Indian or Alaska Native. The residence of first-time degree or certificate-seeking students was characterized as 1.7% in-state, 85% out-of-state, and 8% from foreign countries (Integrated Postsecondary Education System, 2016).

## Instrumentation

Two different types of instruments were used to collect data from the population of this mixed-methods case study, including surveys and interview guides. Details of the surveys and interviews are provided in the following sections, including information on the validity, content, and target population of each instrument.

## Surveys

Three different surveys were developed to target three of the population groups of this study: RAs, housekeeping and mechanic employees, and students. The survey questions were developed by the researcher; face validity was established by the researcher's dissertation committee. Reliability of the surveys was not established. Surveys were administered electronically through Campus Labs (2017), a data platform utilized by colleges and universities, including the institution being investigated in this case study. The surveys are included in Appendices G through J.

The survey developed for RAs included 39 questions regarding demographics, involvement in campus activities, motivations to apply for the Residential Advisor position, and interactions with other stakeholders. For instance, one question asked participants to indicate their level of agreement with the statement, 'It is important for RAs to know housekeepers working in the residential college.' Questions asking RAs to reflect on the effectiveness of the living-learning community model were also included in the survey. For instance, one question asked participants to indicate their level of agreement with the statement, 'RAs have a positive impact on freshmen and sophomore students' social engagement within the living-learning community environment.' Several

questions also provided participants with space to explain their responses in a short-answer format.

Next, the survey developed for housekeeping and mechanic employees included 42 questions regarding demographics, work-life qualities, and the perceived benefits of permanent building assignments. For instance, one question asked participants to indicate their level of agreement with the statement, 'Having a permanent building/zone assignment allows me to know the students more personally.' Questions regarding student and staff interaction were also included. For example, one question asked participants to indicate their level of agreement with the statement, 'It makes me feel good when students know me by face, name or story.' Lastly, the survey for housekeeping and mechanic employees asked participants to rank the importance of various aspects of their jobs, such as job security, hourly pay, tuition reimbursement, or appreciation from students.

The third survey was targeted towards sophomore-level undergraduate students. This survey included 67 questions related to demographics, involvement in campus activities, and satisfaction with the living-learning community environment. For example, one question asked participants to rate their agreement with the statement, 'My residential college fostered an environment that helped me connect with students, staff, and faculty.' Other questions pertained to student interactions with the housekeeping and mechanic employees, the FFs, the RCDs, and the RAs. For instance, one question asked students to rate their agreement with the statement, 'I feel comfortable going to my RAs, RCDs, and/or FFs to address my concerns.' Lastly, participants were asked to list the importance of various factors that affected their decision to attend the institution, such as

academics, dining services, newness of living spaces, cleaning services, club options, or the FFs program.

**Interview Guides**

In addition to surveys, interview guides were used as instruments to collect data for this mixed-methods case study. Five different interview guides were developed: One for each of the administrators, one for the FFs, and one for the RCDs. All interview guides were semi-structured in order to allow for rich dialogue among the participants and with the researcher (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The interview guides are included in Appendices K through O.

The interview guide for the Dean of Students included 15 open-ended questions regarding the development of the living-learning model, the restructuring of staff, and the impact of FFs, RCDs, and RAs. For instance, one question prompt stated, 'Discuss your decision to increase staffing so that each building would be assigned permanent housekeeping and building mechanics.' There were also questions related to past methods of assessment and ideas for future improvement. For instance, one question prompt stated, 'Discuss the ways the living-learning community model can improve in the future.'

Next, the interview guide for the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Residential Learning included 15 discussion prompts. Given this administrator's role in managing the FFs program, most questions were aimed at the development and impact of the FFs program model. For instance, one question asked, 'Discuss driving factors of your decision to spearhead the implementation of the Faculty Fellows program.'

The third interview guide was developed for the Director of Residential Life. Given this administrator's oversight of housekeeping employees and integration within the residential community, many questions pertained to the role of various staff members. For instance, one question asked 'Discuss ways assigning permanent housekeepers and building mechanics to residential houses or colleges throughout the living-learning community has impacted students as opposed to a traditional rent model of services offered.'

The last two interview guides were designed to guide semi-structured conversations among the FFs and the RCDs. The FFs interview guide included 17 questions regarding the motivations to apply for the position, as well as the perceived impact on student life. For instance, one question asked, 'In what ways do you help to improve the undergraduate experience through informal contact with students?' Another question prompted, 'Discuss reasons you wanted to be part of the residential life living-learning community at this institution as a Faculty Fellow.'

The final interview guide was developed for the RCDs and consisted of 16 discussion prompts regarding motivations to apply for the position, interaction with key members, and the perceived impact of their role on students. One question prompted, 'Describe your primary role as a RCD and how you go about achieving it.' A second question asked, 'Discuss the ways a RCD is an asset to a first-year student.'

**Data Collection**

Data collection was conducted by the researcher during the 2014 to 2015 school year. Written consent was obtained by each participant in the study; the consent forms are listed in Appendices D through F. The surveys were administered electronically to all

groups via their work and or school email address using the data platform Campus Labs (2017) during May of 2015. Participants were asked to complete the surveys within two weeks, no reminder emails were sent.

Participants for the one-on-one interviews and focus groups were sent an invitation to participate in the study via work email. The one-on-one interviews and focus group interviews were conducted during August and September of 2015. Each one-on-one interview was conducted in the participant's office and both focus group interviews were conducted in a conference room in the Office of Residential Life. Given the researcher's employment within Residential Life at the research site, the interviews were conducted by a graduate student unaffiliated with the institution. Each focus group consisted of four to six participants. All interviews were audio recorded.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis was performed separately on the survey and interview data. The following sections provide a description of the methods used to analyze the survey data and the qualitative interview data.

**Data Analysis: Surveys**

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the survey data for each population group via the Campus Labs (2017) software. In Chapter Four, the results will be presented per the data obtained from the RAs, housekeeping staff, and mechanic staff.

**Qualitative Data Analysis: Interviews**

Upon transcription, the one-on-one interviews and focus group interviews were combined into a Word document and analyzed using the constant comparative method (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This method involves an iterative process of open coding the

data, identifying larger themes, organizing the codes to represent the themes, and reorganizing as needed. Glaser (2008) defined the four stages of the constant comparative method as "(1) comparing incidents applicable to each category, (2) integrating categories and their properties, (3) delimiting the theory, and (4) writing the theory" (The constant comparative section, para. 1). The resulting themes and subthemes generated from the qualitative data will be will be illustrated in a concise table in Chapter Four.

**Summary**

This study was a mixed-methods, single case, case study of a living-learning program at a top-tier, Midwestern university. The purpose of this study was twofold: to explore the effectiveness of an undergraduate residential living-learning community at a top-tier university in regards to student satisfaction and interaction, and to investigate elements of staff job satisfaction and long-term retention of housekeeping and mechanic employees. The research site was characterized as private, not-for-profit, non-religious, highly residential doctoral university with the highest level of research activity. The program being studied at this research site was a living-learning community that was established in the mid-1990s.

The population of this study consisted of nine different stakeholders or groups of stakeholders, including three high-level administrators, the FFs, RCDs, and RAs, housekeeping and mechanic employees, and sophomore-level undergraduate students. Data collection included: Surveys of the RAs, housekeeping and mechanic employees, and students; one-on-one interviews of the Dean of Students, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Residential Learning, and the Director of Residential Life; focus group

interviews with the FFs and RCDs. Thus, triangulation was achieved by using multiple methods of data collection and multiple sources of data (Denzin, 1978).

Data collection occurred during the 2014 to 2015 school year. The survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistics using the Campus Labs (2017) software. The qualitative interview data was analyzed using the constant comparative method (Glaser, 2008; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The results of the study will be presented in Chapter Four

# Chapter Four: Results

## Introduction

This chapter provides the results of the data collection and analysis. As outlined in Chapter Three, the surveys were analyzed using descriptive statistics with Campus Labs (2017) software and will be presented per the data from each population group: Housekeeping and mechanic employees, RAs, and students. The interviews were analyzed using the constant comparative method (Glaser, 2008; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) and will be presented by the themes that emerged collectively from the interviews with the Dean of Students, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Residential Learning, the Director of Residential Life, the FFs, and the RCDs. A summary of the results concludes this chapter.

## Data Results: Surveys

The results of the data analysis are presented in the following sections per the three populations surveyed. The three populations include: Housekeeping and mechanic employees; RAs; and students. Each section begins with a summary of the response rate and demographic information, followed by the key findings from each population. Though the demographic information of the housekeeping and mechanic employees is presented separately, the findings from the surveys are presented collectively given the similarly of the survey they were asked to completed.

## Housekeeping and Mechanic Employees

A total of 62 housekeeping employees completed the survey out of the 75 that were invited to participate, resulting in a response rate of 83%. Of the participants that responded, 78% were women and 22% were men. Regarding race and ethnicity, 55%

identified as White, 19% identified as Black or African American, 2% identified as multiracial, and 23% identified as "other," and indicated their race as Bosnian, Libyan, or Somalian. Of the mechanic employees, seven completed the survey out of the 12 that were invited to participate, resulting in a response rate of 58%. Of this population, 14% were women and 86% were men. Regarding race and ethnicity, 100% of the respondents identified as White.

Table 1

*Percentage of Housekeeping and Mechanic Staff Demographics*

| **Demographics** | **Housekeeping Employees (%)** | **Mechanic Employees (%)** |
|---|---|---|
| Gender: Woman | 78 | 14 |
| Gender: Man | 22 | 86 |
| Race and Ethnicity: White | 55 | 100 |
| Race and Ethnicity: Black or African American | 19 | 0 |
| Race and Ethnicity: Multiracial | 2 | 0 |
| Race and Ethnicity: Other (Bosnian, Libyan, or Somalian) | 23 | 0 |

The housekeeping and mechanic staff were asked to identify their level of agreement with statements regarding the importance of various work-life qualities. The work-life qualities that the highest percentage of housekeeping employees identified as important were: satisfaction with medical benefits (93.5%), pride in job performance (93.6%), familiarity with students and staff (88.7%), and job security (88.7%). The

work-life quality that the lowest percentage of housekeeping employees agreed with was the appropriateness of hourly wage (58.1%).

The work-life qualities that the highest percentage of mechanic employees identified as important were: pride in job performance (85.7%), familiarity with students and staff (74.4%), and job security (71.4%). The work-life quality that the lowest percentage of mechanic employees agreed with was the importance of feeling part of a team (28.1%). These results are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

*Percentage of Housekeeping and Mechanic Staff that Agreed or Strongly Agreed with the Importance of Various Work-Life Qualities*

| **Work-Life Quality** | **Housekeeping Employees (%)** | **Mechanic Employees (%)** |
|---|---|---|
| Familiarity with students and staff | 88.7 | 74.4 |
| Pride in job performance | 93.6 | 85.7 |
| Job security | 88.7 | 71.4 |
| Appropriateness of hourly wage | 58.1 | 57.2 |
| Satisfaction with medical benefits | 93.5 | 42.9 |
| Satisfaction with retirement benefits | 87.1 | 57.2 |
| Feeling valued by the university | 77.4 | 42.9 |
| Feeling part of a team | 83.9 | 28.6 |

Next, housekeeping and mechanic employees were surveyed regarding the perceived benefits of having permanent building assignments. Of those surveyed, 85.5% of housekeepers and 85.7% of mechanics indicated they prefer a permanent building

assignment; 87.1% of housekeeping employees and 85.7% of mechanic employees agreed or strongly agreed that having permanent building assignments helped cultivate personal relationships with students; 85.5% of housekeeping employees and 85.7% of mechanic employees agreed or strongly agreed that their assignments also resulted in improved work performance. These findings are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3

*Percentage of Housekeeping and Mechanic Staff that Agreed or Strongly Agreed with the Benefits of Having Permanent Building Assignments*

| **Benefits of Permanent Building Assignments** | **Housekeeping Employees (%)** | **Mechanic Employees (%)** |
|---|---|---|
| Personal relationships with students | 87.1 | 85.7 |
| Improved work performance | 85.5 | 85.7 |

Participants were also asked to identify their agreement with the importance of various aspects student and staff interactions. Of those surveyed, student satisfaction was important to 93.5% of housekeeping employees and 85.7% of mechanic employees. Students' trust in staff was important to 88.7% of housekeeping employees and 85.7% of mechanic employees, while students' appreciation of staff was important to 95.2% of housekeeping employees and 71.4% of mechanic employees. Students' concern for staff well-being was important to 71% of housekeeping and 42.9% of mechanic employees. Lastly, 90.3% of housekeeping employees and 85.7% of mechanic employees agreed or strongly agreed that staff want to be known by their students. These findings are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4

*Percentage of Housekeeping and Mechanic Staff that Agreed or Strongly Agreed with the Importance of Various Aspects of Student-Staff Interaction*

| **Student-Staff Interaction** | **Housekeeping Employees (%)** | **Mechanic Employees (%)** |
|---|---|---|
| Student satisfaction is important | 93.5 | 85.7 |
| Students trust staff | 88.7 | 85.7 |
| Students appreciate staff | 95.2 | 71.4 |
| Students are concerned for staff well-being | 71 | 42.9 |
| Staff want to be known by students | 90.3 | 85.7 |

The final set of findings regarding housekeeping and mechanic employees asked participants to identify their agreement with statements about driving factors of long-term retention. Of those surveyed, 93.6% of housekeeping employees and 71.4% of mechanic employees indicated they intend to continue employment at the institution in their current position for at least the next three years. The top three factors that the highest percentage of housekeeping employees identified as driving factors in long-term retention were job security (60.8%), ease or pace of duties (25%), and permanent building assignments (21.1%). In contrast, no employees identified weekends off, opportunities to work overtime, or appreciation from students as driving factors in long-term retention.

Of the mechanic employees, the top three factors that the highest percentage of participants identified as driving factors in long-term retention were permanent building assignments (66.7%), job security (57.1%), and appreciation from students (50%).

Table 5

*Percentage of Housekeeping and Mechanic Staff that Indicated Various Factors As Driving Long-Term Retention*

| **Driving Factors in Long-Term Retention** | **Housekeeping Employees (%)** | **Mechanic Employees (%)** |
|---|---|---|
| Job security | 60.8 | 57.1 |
| Hourly pay | 20.5 | 0 |
| Time-off benefits | 3.3 | 0 |
| Health benefits | 18.5 | 0 |
| Retirement benefits | 5.9 | 0 |
| Tuition reimbursement | 8.7 | 0 |
| Ease/pace of duties | 25 | 0 |
| Set work hours | 7.7 | 0 |
| Paid holiday time-off | 14.3 | 0 |
| Weekends off | 0 | 0 |
| Opportunities to work overtime | 0 | 0 |
| Appreciation from students | 0 | 50 |
| Permanent building assignments | 21.1 | 66.7 |

In contrast, no mechanic employees identified the remaining factors (hourly pay, time-off benefits, health benefits, retirement benefits, tuition reimbursement, ease or pace of duties, set work hours, paid holiday time-off, weekends off, and opportunities to work overtime) as important to long-term retention. These results are summarized in Table 5

**Residential Advisors (RAs)**

A total of 64 RAs completed the survey out of the 125 that were invited to participate, resulting in a response rate of 51%. Participants were asked to identify their level of agreement with various contributions of their role to the living-learning community at the research site. There was high agreement among RAs with all contributions, including promotion of student social engagement (98%), facilitation of interactions between students, faculty, and staff (76%), relationship building (96%), leadership of undergraduate students (96%), and guidance of undergraduate students (96%). These findings are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6

*Percentage of RAs that Agreed or Strongly Agreed with Various Contributions of Their Role to the Living-Learning Community*

| **Contributions of RAs to the Living-Learning Community** | **RAs (%)** |
|---|---|
| Promotion of student social engagement | 98 |
| Facilitation of interactions between students, faculty, and staff | 76 |
| Relationship building | 96 |
| Leadership of undergraduate students | 96 |
| Guidance of undergraduate students | 96 |

Lastly, RAs were also asked to identify their level of agreement with statements regarding the importance of interactions with housekeeping and mechanic employees. Of those surveyed, 92% agreed with the importance of being familiar with both housekeeping and mechanic employees. These findings are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7

*Percentage of RAs that Agreed or Strongly Agreed with the Importance of Interactions with Housekeeping and Mechanic Employees*

| **Interactions with Housekeeping and Mechanic Employees** | **RAs (%)** |
|---|---|
| Familiarity with housekeeping employee | 92 |
| Familiarity with mechanic employee | 92 |

**Students**

A total of 1,311 sophomore-level students completed the survey out of the 1,700 that were invited to participate, resulting in a response rate of 77%. Of those surveyed, 72.1% agreed or strongly agreed that the quality of their living-learning facilities exceeded their expectations. Also, 62.76% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the dorm amenities and services at the research site factored into their decision to attend the university.

Participants were asked to identify their level of agreement with various statements regarding the effects of the living-learning community. Of those surveyed, 62.5% agreed that the community resulted in a connection with other students, staff, and faculty, while 40.2% agreed it contributed to their social development and 89.2% agreed it created opportunities to participate in social gatherings in the residential halls. Regarding interactions with other stakeholders, 75.7% of participants felt a sense of familiarity, 67.9% felt a sense of concern from, and 62.8% felt comfortable in approaching RCDs, RAs, and FFs. Lastly, 50.2% of participants felt the community resulted in appreciation for housekeeping employees and 34.2% felt it resulted in appreciation for mechanic employees. These findings are summarized in Table 8.

Table 8

*Percentage of Sophomore-Level Students that Agreed or Strongly Agreed with Various Effects of the Living-Learning Community*

| **Effects of the Living-Learning Community** | **Students (%)** |
|---|---|
| Connection with students, staff, and faculty | 62.5 |
| Social development | 40.2 |
| Opportunities to participate in social gatherings in the resident halls | 89.2 |
| Sense of familiarity from RCDs, RAs, and FFs | 75.7 |
| Sense of concern from RCDs, RAs, and FFs | 67.9 |
| Comfort in approaching RCDs, RAs, and FFs | 62.8 |
| Appreciation for housekeeping employees | 50.2 |
| Appreciation for mechanic employees | 34.2 |

Lastly, students were asked to identify their level of agreement with various aspects of their interactions with housekeeping and mechanic employees. Of those surveyed, 70.6% felt familiar with the housekeeper, 93.4% trusted the housekeeper's work, and 76.6% felt a sense of safety and security from the housekeeper's presence. In contrast, 49.3% felt familiar with the mechanic, 87.7% trusted the mechanic's work, and 67.6% felt a sense of safety and security from the mechanic's employee. These findings are summarized in Table 9.

Table 9

*Percentage of Sophomore-Level Students that Agreed or Strongly Agreed with Various Aspects of Their Interactions with Housekeeping and Mechanic Employees*

| **Interactions with Housekeeping and Mechanic Employees** | **Students (%)** |
|---|---|
| Familiarity with housekeeper | 70.6 |
| Trust in housekeeper's work | 93.4 |
| Sense of security and safety from housekeeper's presence | 76.6 |
| Familiarity with mechanic | 49.3 |
| Trust in mechanic's work | 87.7 |
| Sense of security and safety from mechanic's presence | 67.6 |

**Qualitative Data Results: Interviews**

Thirteen themes emerged from the qualitative data analysis. Each theme is supported by subthemes and illustrative quotes. The 13 themes include: Creation of the living-learning model; characteristics that set this living-learning program apart from other institutions; transitioning from dorm-style living to suite-style residential colleges; how residential colleges and communities are used to create a living-learning environment outside the classroom; university motivations for developing FF positions; motivations of FFs to live and work in a residential community; FFs as an asset to students; RCDs as an asset to students; motivations of RCDs to live and work in a residential community; RAs an asset to students; university motivations for increasing housekeeping and mechanic staff; how success of the program has been measured in the past; how the living-learning model can improve in the future. The qualitative results are summarized in Table 10.

Table 10

*Emergent Themes and Subthemes of the Living-Learning Model*

| **Theme** | **Subthemes** |
|---|---|
| Creation of the living-learning model | Schools this program was modeled after<br>Physical space offered by other programs<br>Need to offer resources to faculty |
| Characteristics that set this living-learning program apart from other institutions | Staff term length<br>Grassroots recruitment efforts<br>Recognition as prestigious university program<br>Leadership by senior position |
| Transitioning to suite-style dorms | Task force on undergraduate experience report<br>Increase campus housing<br>Modern students |
| How residential colleges are used to create a living-learning environment outside the classroom | Physical environment<br>At-home learning opportunities<br>Non-academic learning |
| University motivations for developing FF positions | Limited faculty-student interaction<br>Destigmatization of faculty<br>Support for academic success |
| Motivations of FFs to work in a residential community | Desire to connect with students<br>Personal incentives |

| | |
|---|---|
| | New life chapter |
| FFs as an asset to students | Destigmatization of faculty |
| | Academic mentorship |
| | Social outlet |
| | Community building |
| | Varying levels of investment |
| RCDs as an asset to students | Academic liaison |
| | Mentorship |
| | Student safety |
| | Support for the RAs |
| Motivations of RCDs to work in a residential community | Sense of home |
| | Skill development |
| RAs as an asset to students | Diverse staff |
| | Extensive training |
| | Relevant programming |
| | Student safety |
| | Promotion of university culture |
| | Connection to students |
| University motivations for increasing housekeeping and mechanic staff | History of subpar service |
| | Lack of community |
| | Physical space |
| | Student accountability |

| | |
|---|---|
| How the program has been measured in the past | Student surveys<br>Staff surveys<br>Benchmarking |
| How the living-learning model can improve in the future | Physical space<br>Casual interaction<br>Support beyond the first year<br>Academic integration<br>Staff interactions<br>Evaluation |

**Creation of the Living-Learning Community Model**

The theme of creation of the living-learning community model emerged from comments related to a comparison of the programs at other institutions and a resulting identification of the resources that would be needed to put a similar program in place. The Dean of Students offered an initial justification for the creation of the model:

> Students spend 70% of their day (or thereabouts) actually where they live. Even though one chooses a college based on their academic program, which they should, when you really get down to how much of their day they are spending in the classroom or the library, it's really a very small portion of each, and so the residence halls are obviously a really key place…can influence a student's success.

The subtheme of which schools the research site's living-learning community model program was modeled after was informed by a twofold strategy of narrowing site

visits to strictly top-tier institutions and observing both newly formed and well-established programs. According to the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Residential Learning, model programs included Princeton, Yale, the University of Miami, Florida, and Rice University. These institutions were comparable in that the focal point of an honors community, as is common at many colleges and universities, was irrelevant given that all students were considered to be high-achieving.

The Associate Dean of Undergraduate Residential Learning explained, 'We don't need an honors college. That wasn't it. But we needed more intentionality about where students were spending their time and learning outside the classroom.' Site visits to those institutions was also strategic in order to provide a vision of how a novel program would grow into a mature institutional establishment. As such, site visits were conducted at well-established programs such as those at Princeton and Yale, as well as newly formed programs such as that at the University of Miami, Florida.

Relatedly, the second subtheme that emerged identified the physical space offered by other programs within the residence halls that were not present at the research site prior to the creation of the living-learning community model. These spaces included classrooms, seminar spaces in order to facilitate collaboration, and apartments in which faculty would reside within a residential college. In reference to the dynamic of residence halls prior to the creation of the living-learning community program, the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Residential Learning described, 'They were living and learning already, but they weren't doing it in the most strategic way because we didn't have the facilities to do it. And we didn't have the staff in place.' This redesign coincided with the university's preexisting intent to update the residence halls given their

age of approximately 50 years. The Dean of Students described the ideal timing to redesign the residence halls into living-learning communities. The specific layout of the residence halls is further explained in the subtheme of transitioning to suite-style residential colleges.

The third subtheme that emerged to support the creation of the living-learning model was the need to offer specific resources to attract faculty. This subtheme was supported by specific amenities and allocation of resources, including paid utilities, a fireplace, a yard or garden space, technology access, a budget for furniture, and nearby parking. The Associate Dean of Undergraduate Residential Learning described the strategy of 'folding in faculty slowly,' beginning with the first faculty fellow in 1988, and developing capacity from there. Additional aspects designed to attract faculty are captured within the following theme of characteristics that set the research site's living-learning community program apart from other institutions.

**Characteristics that set this Living-Learning Community Model Apart from Other Institutions**

The site visits to peer institutions allowed the research site to identify both strengths and weaknesses of existing programs and to learn from the successes and mistakes of those that came before them. Thus, many of the characteristics that set the research site's living-learning community model apart were informed by challenges witnessed at peer institutions. For instance, the first subtheme that emerged was informed by the high turnover of RCDs and a limitless term for FFs. Therefore, the research site instigated a three-year commitment for its RCDs and a three to five-year commitment for faculty with an opportunity to extend. As a result, the RCDs and FFs are

committed to their campus communities for an appropriate time to both reduce turnover and maintain a strong energy. The Assistant Director of Residential Life describes the faculty element as unique in of itself; 'The opportunity to bring the faculty member and their family into the community where they live, where the students are living, it's just sort of part of the fabric and the culture of that residential college.'

The second subtheme that emerged was the grassroots process of identifying high quality faculty to serve as FFs. Compared to certain peer institutions that utilize an extensive interview process, the WUSTL model uses word-of-mouth recruitment. The Associate Dean of Undergraduate Residential Learning describes the process as 'very organic' and occurring over a cup of coffee. Due to an extensive wait list, the university is able to be very selective with its FF, as well. In 2014, one opening was met by 20 interested faculty members. Of the eight FF in 2014, seven were tenured and the eighth was at the highest rank possible for a non-tenured position.

In addition to high quality FFs, the third subtheme that distinguishes the research site's living-learning community model was its identity as a university program versus strictly a residential program. The Associate Dean of Undergraduate Residential Learning described, 'If you just have it anchored in residential life, again, it doesn't garner the credibility of the academic side of the house. It doesn't have that sort of prestige.' The FF have a joint appointment with the Office of the Provost and the Vice Chancellor for Students, instilling their position in both academics and student affairs.

The fourth and final subtheme that characterized the uniqueness of the research site's living-learning community model was designating a senior position to oversee the person versus an entry-level residential life professional. This resulted in the creation of

a new position, the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Residential Learning. Coupled with the selection of high quality FFs and the straddling of both academics and residential life, oversight by a senior-ranking position has added to the prestige and credibility of the research site's living-learning community.

**Transitioning from Dorms to Suite-Style Residential Colleges**

The theme of transitioning to from dorms to suite-style residential colleges represented a major shift in how the physical space of the research site's residence colleges were reoriented to support the living-learning community model. Supporting subthemes were the Task Force on Undergraduate Experience 1994 Report, an increase in campus housing, and a new understanding of the modern student. Given that this transition happened largely in the 1990's, the narrative of this transition was largely informed by the interviews with the Dean of Students and the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Residential Learning.

The Task Force on Undergraduate Experience sought to investigate the factors that led to an exceptional undergraduate student experience. One of the major elements that arose from its 1994 report was the importance of residence colleges given the finding that students spent 70% of their time in their room. The Dean of Students described how as 'a light bulb went on' that illuminated the overlooked role of the residence college in student success. Compared to traditional dorms where dozens of students share merely a hallway and a bathroom, the suite style dorms would orient two to three students around a common area.

Practical considerations went into this decision, as well, such as an opportunity to host summer conferences for adults that would not want to share a bathroom with dozens

of other guests, as well as an understanding that very few students had shared a bedroom growing up and would appreciate having their own space. The Dean of Students described this shift not only as what would enhance the student experience, but would also be 'more attractive to today's students.'

Another key finding of the report was that only 50% of students were living on campus at this time due to a housing shortage. The Dean of Students expressed the aim to not only increase capacity in terms of numbers but to increase the capacity for cultivating identity and tradition. He described his long-term vision as:

> Some of our peer schools have these faculty programs and these residential colleges with their own traditions and identities…if you go to Harvard, for example, they've been doing it for 300 years. I know, over time, we've only been at it maybe 15, but in 50 years there's going to be more identity and tradition involved in it, and I think as we get future generations, hopefully we get students who preference when they come in and are wanting to live in a residential college. They'll actually say, 'I'd like to live in such and such of college because my parents lived there.'

Thus, the transition from dorms to suite-style residential colleges was informed by data regarding the percentage of time students spent in their room and thereby influence student life, an aim to attract modern students that would appreciate having their own spaces, and a desire to create a long-lasting identity and culture of the research site's residential life. Precisely how suite-style residential colleges and the overall living-learning community model support and foster learning outside the classroom is supported in the following section.

**How Residential Colleges are used to Create a Living-Learning Community Environment Outside the Classroom**

Next, the theme of how residential colleges are used to create a living-learning community environment outside the classroom was characterized by sub-themes of the physical environment, at-home learning opportunities, and non-academic learning. One FF captured the essence of the living-learning community model:

> It's the whole mix…as a holistic student we deal with your social needs, your academic needs, the community-building, all of these different things, and the team of folks that are there sort of form this web of support for students in these different areas.

First, the physical environment was described as distinct from traditional dorms in that seminar rooms and classrooms are built into the living-learning community space, which allow for student-student collaborations and enhanced faculty-student interactions. The Dean of Students described how first-year students in particular are encouraged to participate in study groups and small classes of no more than 20 students held in the residential colleges: 'We want to integrate the living and the learning so that students don't see their lives so segregated as one or the other.' A common practice has been to schedule help sessions in the seminar spaces for the more challenging classes at the beginning of the school year, a resource that is now integrated into the culture of the space. The Dean of Students described how the RAs will mention on a tour to their incoming first-year students:

> The laundry room is over here and the computer lab is over here and oh, in that seminar room, someone is there each Monday night and she'll help you with your

calculus class and on Wednesday nights there's some guy who helps with chemistry.

The subtheme of at-home learning opportunities emerged primarily from participants' descriptions of the Residential Peer Mentor Program. The RCDs described this program as a network of peer tutors that provide academic support for students in their residential college, which again is distinct from traditional dorms where a student would leave to meet a tutor elsewhere on campus. The peer tutors are upper-class students that not only provide tutoring in the residential colleges, but live there themselves, thereby further contributing to the residential living-learning community. The peer mentors, along with the FFs and RCDs, contribute to the students' network of academic support.

The third and final sub-theme of non-academic learning emerged from discussions on the Community Engagement Model (CEM) and its overarching goals. The Associate Dean of Undergraduate Residential Learning described the CEM as the inclusion of five focus areas: personal wellness, interpersonal skills, diversity, civic engagement, and life skills. One RCD commented on this model as addressing 'the intangible things, like we're not giving you a grade, but you are becoming more culturally competent…will make you a better human being in this world. And hopefully a better professional as well.' The programming of the CEM is based on the needs of the students at each year, such as alcohol abuse awareness, and continually evolves based on student feedback.

**University Motivations for Developing FF Positions**

The theme of university motivations for developing the FF positions emerged from the subthemes of limited faculty-student interaction, a desire to destigmatize faculty, and as a means to support academic success. Before the initiation of the learning model in the early 1990's, the Association Dean of Undergraduate Residential Learning noted it would be 'very rare to see faculty' near the South 40, a primarily residential area of campus, and that disrupting this separation felt somewhat risky as it was shifting a cultural norm. Given the physical landscape and cultural norms of campus at that time, there was very little opportunity for students and faculty to interact outside the classroom. As a result, the university developed the FFs positions as a way to be more strategic and intentional about connecting faculty and students.

The FFs positions were also developed to destigmatize faculty from being aloof or disconnected from campus life. The Dean of Students commented:

> We wanted to create spaces and encourage more student-faculty interaction, because… we thought it would help the faculty be viewed by students as human…and also we thought it would help the students reach out to faculty to ask for help if they needed.

The Associate Dean of Undergraduate Residential Learning also described how the faculty members' personal lives contribute to an overall sense of community. The FFs not only provide unique opportunities for students (such as a private tour of the Missouri Botanical Gardens), but also create a sense of home. She described how the FFs will greet students and parents during move-in and the parents often respond with, "'I'm relieved! There's a family here!'"

The role of the FFs is not just to provide a sense of community and family but also to enhance academic success. The relationship between students and faculty has the potential to contribute to students' overall growth and development. The faculty are perceived as a resource to students and are intentional about making themselves available to students. A FF reported a recent experience of a student that came to him panicking about the inability to take a final exam due to a discussion. The fellow was able to 'communicate directly with the academic side of things' by contacting the student's academic advisor and instructor for the course. The FFs may often serve as a 'grounding point' for students by sharing their own academic successes and failures. One FF recounted his experience of telling students she was pre-med as an undergraduate and received a C in chemistry but that she went on with life and became a successful professional.

**Motivations of FFs to Work in a Residential Community**

While the previous section described the motivations of the university to create the FFs positions, the following section covers the motivations of FFs to work in a residential community. This theme was primarily supported by the FF focus group interview. Subthemes that emerged were a desire to connect with students, the personal incentives, and the opportunity to start a new chapter in life.

Several faculty spoke of their desire to connect with students, saw the FFs position as another level of involvement, and even as a way to have fun with students where they live. One FF described it as a 'deeper student contact experience.' Another started out as a Faculty Associate (FA), which are faculty members that are assigned an

office on a floor within a residential college but do not live there themselves, and saw the FF position as a 'more intense experience.'

The incentives or 'perks' were also a motivation for faculty to pursue a FF position. Based on the FFs interview, the primary perks included the financial incentive and the opportunity for their children to attend school in a reputable district. The Associate Dean of Undergraduate Residential Learning further elaborated on the university's South 40 area of campus as falling within the zones for the Clayton school district. She reported, 'It shouldn't be a main reason a faculty member and his or her family should move on, but it's a nice perk if they have young kids.'

The third motivation that faculty identified was an opportunity to start a new chapter in their lives, and in a way that combined their professional and personal lives. One FF described it as a 'somewhat adventurous path for the past three years without being too crazy.' Another FF described the motivation as:

> We're both tenured here at the university. The way things look right now…we'll never work anywhere else, you know, we will repeat the same…and then we thought it's going to be kind of boring, too. Like this is how our life is going to look for the next whatever 20-something years or more, so we wanted a little something different to do.

Thus, the primary motivations of FFs to work in a residential community were the desire to have a deeper connection with students, especially if they had started as FAs, monetary perks, and location within a good school district for their children, and an opportunity to start a new and different chapter of their life at the university.

**FFs as an Asset to Students**

Building off the previous two themes, the theme of FFs as an asset to students encompassed the many ways in which the FFs contribute to student learning and development. Subthemes included the destigmatization of faculty, academic mentorship, a social outlet, community building, and varying levels of FF commitment.

Similar to the theme of why the university developed the FFs positions, the asset of destigmatizing faculty emerged as the primary asset to students. Participants described how the students are able to see that their professors have lives, can hear more about their personal stories and background, and foster a kindness between students and faculty. One RCD commented:

> I think a lot of students are intimidated by the faculty here, and I think they don't really see them as people that they can have a relationship—just these arbiters of grades. And so, I think that's really helpful for them to build those relationships with them.

The presence of the FFs has also made them more approachable in the classroom. The Associate Dean of Undergraduate Residential Learning described how research supports that residential living-learning community models may lead to students feeling more comfortable accessing office hours or presenting their concerns to their professors. Similarly, the Dean of Students described how the FFs are seen as 'approachable, a human, and a resource.'

Due to this destigmatization, FFs also serve as academic mentors to students. They may give students advice on professional behavior, discuss graduate school, connect them with research opportunities, help them to network, or connect them with

needed academic resources on-campus. One FF described her relationship with a pre-med student:

> I would often act as a gateway and put them in touch with people at the medical school or even just point them things like, "Go look at the website for neuro and anatomy and see if there's somebody there that you might overlap with your interests.

The ability to provide a social outlet also emerged as an asset to students. FFs offer activities for students in their homes, invite students out for dinner, and take them on excursions. Given their various areas of specialty, FFs are able to organize unique opportunities that might not be available to the general public, such as a private tour at the Missouri Botanical Gardens. Lastly, they may also serve as a social outlet by contributing to programming. One RCD described it as 'almost like having another programmer in the building, another set of ideas, another budget if you want to get really down to the logistics of it.'

Relatedly, FFs not only provide a social outlet, but also foster a sense of community among their students. They can serve as a strong voice in the community, especially in times of crisis. One RCD described how the designated FFs has been 'a really strong voice in our community, particularly when there have been times when our community as a whole has been struggling.' FFs also create community by establishing traditions. The Dean of Students described how, along with the RAs, the FFs 'all contribute to this identity of 'I am proud to be part of this community.''

Lastly, a subtheme that emerged as the varying levels in which FFs provide an asset to students. While some participants described the FFs as highly involved in the

residential community and as an ‘incredible resource,’ others described them as being more distant and ‘not ever-present.’ One RCD commented, ‘My relationship with my FF is good, but I just think that expectations around the role are not clear…to me or them necessarily.’ Another described ‘varying levels of investment’ among FFs, and attributed the distance of some fellows to their many responsibilities within the university.

In summary, the assets of the FFs included destigmatization of faculty, their ability to serve as academic mentors, and their contribution to social activities and the sense of community. Variations in faculty involvement within the living-learning community also framed this theme.

**RCDs as an Asset to Students**

Two major themes regarding the RCDs emerged: RCDs as an asset to students and the motivations of RCDs to work in a residential community. First, the theme of RCDs as an asset to students was supported by the subthemes of serving as an academic liaison, developing a mentor relationship, promotion of student safety, and support for the RAs. As an academic liaison, RCDs can communicate directly with academic faculty and staff on the students’ behalf, and thereby serve as a ‘touch point’ between students, faculty, and advisors.

Furthermore, RCDs are viewed as a critical partner in connecting residential life with the academic side of campus. The Associate Dean of Undergraduate Residential Learning described the role of the RCD as, ‘If you think about a wheel, the RCD is really the hub of like, mental health and discipline and community development and diversity and, you know, academic support…people see them as a central person in a student’s life.’

In addition, RCDs develop a mentoring relationship with students. They may act as a coach, model life as a college graduate, and serve as a 'grounding point for students.' One RCD describe their role as 'being a resource, being an encourager, pushing students.' Another RCD described his role as 'I can normalize like, yeah, you make mistakes, but you get up from them and you move past them.'

Next, RCDs also support student safety on-campus, especially regarding mental health, relationship issues, and healthy conflict management. One RCD described her role as the 'gatekeeper for a lot of mental health for students.' Often an RCD will be attuned to a struggling student and do an unofficial intake, and then refer students to student health or mental health services on-campus. Common concerns include conditions such as depression, anxiety, or eating disorders. The RCDs meet with a liaison weekly in the counseling center, thus providing an open line of communication between student concerns and professional services.

Lastly, RCDs also support the RAs primarily by training them and setting expectations. According to one RCD, 'They are the eyes and ears of the community when I can't be there or when I can't be engaged with the students 24/7.' Another RCD described, 'If the student is having an issue, like, I'll pull in the RA and have the conversation and really pick their brain on what they think might be best for that student as we go about supporting them holistically.' RCDs may also set expectations for their RAs, such as encouraging them to have a one-on-one conversation with a student and providing structure on how to do so.

**Motivations of RCDs to Work in a Residential Community**

Alternatively, the second theme that emerged regarding RCDs was their own motivations to work in a residential community. The two primary subthemes that emerged from the RCD interviews were a sense of home and the opportunity for skill development. One RCD describe the sense of home as 'it felt very relational,' while another described it as, 'I felt most at home and I could be most myself and do work that I really loved.' One participant reported, 'I really valued being at a place where students valued their academics…and that the curricular and co-curricular components were very intertwined.' RCDs also saw this role as an opportunity to develop their skills. One RCD described it as a 'generalist role, so it's an opportunity to use a lot of different skills and be pulled in a lot of different directions.'

**RAs as an Asset to Students**

In addition to FFs and RCDs, the RAs were also distinctly identified as an asset to students. The RAs were characterized as a diverse staff in terms of academics, race, gender, and involvement level, as 'some of our best and brightest students,' and as the 'main community builders.' Participants discussed the extensive and ongoing training RAs receive, including mental health, counseling and communication, team building, university policy and procedures, and diversity training.

The Associate Dean of Undergraduate Residential Learning described the RAs as a 'big brother' or 'big sister' to students. Their role is to provide students within their residential college with programs that are centered on the Community Engagement Model. Relevant programming has included not only educational programs but also health, wellbeing, personal safety and security, and social programs. It is through these

structured programs that comments on three primary assets of RAs emerged including: support for student safety, promotion of university and residential community culture, and connection to students.

RAs support student safety by serving as a 'frontline resource,' the 'first point of contact,' or 'first responders' in a student's time of need. One RCD described the RAs as the "eyes and ears" of the community. Another RCD described, 'they [RAs] are the ones that get to know the students—they get to know kind of what's happening in their lives, what they are struggling with, or what they are really succeeding at.' RAs are often counted on to provide an initial response to their community following any negative incident, and work in conjunction with the RCDs about the best plan to support students holistically.

Also, RAs promote university culture by setting community standards, educating students about university values, and setting a tone of inclusion and respect. They also help students develop a sense of pride in their residential community. The Dean of Students commented:

> The RAs have been instrumental in developing a lot of swag, and I didn't even know what swag was 15 years ago when it started, but now each res college has to outdo each other in how they display their pride for where they live…the faculty, the professional staff, the RA, all contribute to this identify of 'I am proud to be a part of this community.'

Lastly, RAs also have a unique connection to students given their status as upper class students. They foster this connection by taking students on off-campus excursions, connecting them with needed on-campus resources, helping them find their place at the

university, and communicating on behalf of their needs to the RCDs when necessary. One RCD commented on how they are able to 'know a student's story' through RAs that serve as the main touch point.

**University Motivations for Increasing Housekeeping and Mechanic Staff**

Beyond the network of FFs, FAs, RCDs, and RAs, the university motivations for increasing housekeeping and mechanic staff in the residential colleges emerged as a prominent theme. The primary motivations identified were the history of subpar service, lack of community, changing physical space, and potential to increase student accountability. The Dean of Students provided the primary commentary on the history of subpar service at the university, citing complaints from students and the high rate of staff turnover.

Given that housekeeping was outsourced to a third-party at the time, there was also a lack of community between students and staff. There was no personal contact between the two, and the third-party housekeepers were perceived as 'nameless faces' in the community. Upon observing this disconnect, the university desired housekeepers to feel integrated in the residential community, and to foster a connection between them and the students.

The physical living space at the research site was undergoing changes as the university was preparing to update its residential colleges from dorm-style living to suite-style residential college living spaces. Reiterating the statistic that students spend 70% of their time in their room, the Dean of Students identified the pressing need to provide students with a 'safe, clean, secure place' of a 'higher standard.' Also, given the plan to carve out faculty apartments within the residential colleges, the university recognized the

need to provide clean living environment that would be attractive to faculty members and their families.

Lastly, the fourth motivation to increase housekeeping and mechanic staff was the potential to increase student accountability. The university hoped that by having relatively permanent housekeepers in the residential colleges, students would be more likely to take care of their space, to be respectful of the facility, and to be more accountable given that the students would personally know the housekeeper and mechanics cleaning and maintaining their living space. The Director of Housing Operations reported, 'I think students are more accountable to one another especially because they have those relationships with, um, the dedicated team who is responsible for their space.'

**How Success of the Program Has Been Measured in the Past**

Given the relative novelty of the Community Engagement Model, the theme emerged of how success of the program has been measured in the past. Subthemes that emerged included: student surveys, staff surveys, and benchmarking. The student surveys are used both to assess satisfaction and to assess learning outcomes of the Community Engagement Model. They are integrated across residential life office and the student health services office, and therefore span a variety of topics. The staff surveys are used to collect data from RAs, RCDs, FFs, and FAs. According to the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Residential Learning, all surveys are administered through an online software known as Student Voice and are overseen by an individual that administers assessment for the whole division. The program has also been measured via benchmarking; according to the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Residential Learning

this can be challenging given the uniqueness of the program. The university also uses the Acofi Schools measure, which compares data from senior exit surveys with over 150 other schools.

**How the Living-Learning Community Model can be Improved in the Future**

The theme of how the living-learning community model can be improved in the future emerged from interviews across the board of the leadership, FFs and FAs, and RCDs and RAs. Subthemes that emerged included physical space, more casual interaction between faculty and students, support beyond the first year, academic integration, staff interaction, and evaluation. The need to continually improve the physical space was supported by comments on the need to renovate or replace older dorm-style halls, update suite-style residential colleges, ensure there is a FF apartment and seminar room in every residential college, and potentially decrease the size of the residential college to create even greater intimacy.

The desire for more casual interaction between faculty and students emerged from reflections on how unplanned, unexpected events turned out to be the most interesting. One FF commented on how the conversation can flow more easily when there is no pressure, naming this the 'chips and salsa notion.' Another FF commented, 'I would have kept it more informal,' especially during busy semesters when scheduling regular events felt daunting.

In addition, the need for increased support beyond the first year emerged as a subtheme of how to improve the model in the future. One RCD commented on how the current model does not take into account the unique experiences of sophomores, juniors,

or seniors, and is ‘first-year centric.’ Another RCD reflected on the need to develop students that may live in the same residential college for multiple years.

Academic integration also emerged as a subtheme. This was described as a need to even further integrate living and learning so students do not view their lives as segregated. Suggestions were to teach courses in the residential colleges, connect FAs more with the courses, and involve RAs more in academic programs. For example, the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Residential Learning described an upcoming one-credit pilot course that would be taught by five different FAs on students’ floors, with the hope of better integrating the FAs.

Staff interactions were also commented on as an area for potential improvement. Suggestions included more clearly defining the roles of RCDs and FFs, designing an orientation to support introductions between FFs and students, and improving communications among the various roles. One FF described his personal goal of working closely with the FAs next year to connect with students early on during August and September. He commented, ‘I think that’s critical and if that doesn’t happen the faculty associate doesn’t feel the connection.’

Lastly, evaluation emerged as the final means to improve the program. Participants described a need to assess the impact of the Community Engagement Model as a whole, including the learning outcomes. The assessment can help identify what aspects of the model are working and which are not. Participants also suggested the development of a metric to assess the impact of FFs on students. One RCD commented:

> We all have thoughts…on what we can do better. We think about what we can do better to connect our faculty and what we can do better in programming. We don't have a whole lot of data to back up those choices at this point.

Similarly, the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Residential Learning discussed the potential to publicize results from the Student Voice surveys in an effort to be more transparent. The data may be shared via TV screens located throughout the residential colleges. She suggested, 'Let's shoot back some of the data, what we're learning from them, and put that out there.'

**Summary**

Based on the descriptive surveys of housekeeping and mechanic employees, RAs, and students, key findings emerged. Housekeeping and mechanic employees identified the importance of various work-life qualities, the highest of which was pride in job performance for both the housekeeping and mechanic employees. Most housekeeping and mechanic employees preferred a permanent building assignment and felt this resulted in personal relationships with students and improved work performance. Regarding long-term retention, housekeeping employees identified job security, ease or pace of duties, and permanent building assignments as key factors; mechanic employees identified permanent building assignments, job security, and appreciation from students as key factors.

RAs that participated in this study agreed with the contributions of their role to the living-learning community, including promotion of student social engagement, facilitation of interactions between students, faculty and staff, relationship building, and

leadership and guidance of undergraduate students. Most agreed that familiarity with housekeeping and mechanic employees was important.

Students that participated in the study agreed that the living-learning community resulted in various effects, such as opportunities to participate in social gatherings, a connection with students, staff, and faculty, and a sense of familiarity from RCDs, RAs, and FFs. Most felt the living-learning facilities exceeded their expectations.

Based on the qualitative interviews with the RCDs, FFs, Dean of Students, Assistant Director of Residential Life, and Associate Dean of Undergraduate Residential Learning, 13 themes emerged. Regarding the unique model at the research site, these themes included the creation of the living-learning community model, characteristics that set the program apart from other institutions, the transition to suite-style dorms, and how residential colleges are used to create a living-learning environment outside the classroom.

Regarding the FFs, the themes of university motivations for developing FF positions, motivations of FFs to work in a residential community, and FFs as an asset to students emerged. Regarding RCDs and RAs, themes emerged of RCDs as an asset to students, motivations of RCDs to work in a residential community, and RAs as an asset to students. Lastly, the final themes that emerged from the interviews were university motivations for increasing housekeeping and mechanic staff, how success of the program has been measured in the past, and how the living-learning community model can improve in the future.

# Chapter Five: Summary, Discussion, and Recommendations

## Introduction

This chapter provides a concise summary of the study, a discussion of the key findings as they relate to each research question, recommendations to the institution that served as the study site, and recommendations for future research. Following that are the conclusions that can be drawn from this study, as well as a summary of the chapter.

## Summary of the Study

This study was a mixed-methods, single case, case study of a living-learning program at a top-tier, Midwestern university. The purpose of this study was twofold: to explore the effectiveness of an undergraduate residential living-learning community at a top-tier university in regards to student satisfaction and interaction, and to investigate elements of staff job satisfaction and long-term retention of housekeeping and mechanic employees. The research site was characterized as private, not-for-profit, non-religious, highly residential doctoral university with the highest level of research activity. The program being studied at this research site was a living-learning community that was established in the mid-1990s.

The population of this study consisted of nine different stakeholders or groups of stakeholders, including three high-level administrators, the FFs, RCDs, and RAs, housekeeping and mechanic employees, and sophomore-level undergraduate students. Data collection included surveys, one-on-one interviews, and focus group interviews, and was collected during the 2014 to 2015 school year.

Based on the descriptive surveys of housekeeping and mechanic employees, RAs, and students, key findings emerged. Housekeeping and mechanic employees identified

the importance of various work-life qualities, the highest of which was pride in job performance for both the housekeeping and mechanic employees. Most housekeeping and mechanic employees preferred a permanent building assignment and felt this resulted in personal relationships with students and improved work performance. Regarding long-term retention, housekeeping employees identified job security, ease or pace of duties, and permanent building assignments as key factors; mechanic employees identified permanent building assignments, job security, and appreciation from students as key factors.

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Students that participated in the study agreed that the living-learning community resulted in various effects, such as opportunities to participate in social gatherings, a connection with students, staff, and faculty, and a sense of familiarity from RCDs, RAs, and FFs. Most felt the living-learning facilities exceeded their expectations.

Thirteen themes emerged from the qualitative data analysis: creation of the living-learning model; characteristics that set this living-learning program apart from other institutions; transitioning from dorm-style living to suite-style residential colleges; how residential colleges and communities are used to create a living-learning environment outside the classroom; university motivations for developing FF positions; motivations of FFs to live and work in a residential community; FFs as an asset to students; RCDs as an

asset to students; motivations of RCDs to live and work in a residential community; RAs an asset to students; university motivations for increasing housekeeping and mechanic staff; how success of the program has been measured in the past; how the living-learning model can improve in the future. The following section provides a discussion of the key findings.

**Discussion: Key Findings**

The discussion of key findings is organized around the three research questions underlying this study. Results of both the descriptive and qualitative data analysis are integrated to formulate an appropriate response to each question. A comparison of this study's findings to the existing research on living-learning communities is also integrated in this section.

**Research Question One**

The first research question was: Does the integrated living-learning community model at the research site provide an environment that encourages learning and personal growth? This question was informed by the program's mission, as noted in Washington University in St. Louis (2017d), to "provide a safe environment that encourages learning and personal growth in an inclusive community that empowers and challenges our residents" (Mission statement, para. 1). Several elements of the qualitative data analysis supported that that this mission was being upheld. The residential colleges promoted at-home learning opportunities and non-academic learning; the FFs provide academic mentorship and community building; the RCDs served as an academic liaisons and mentors. Elements of the descriptive data analysis supported the effectiveness of this mission from the viewpoints of the RAs and the students. The vast majority of RAs

agreed that their role promoted student social engagement (98.0%) and relationship building (96.0%). From the student perspective, the majority (62.5%) confirmed that the living-learning community facilitated a connection with students, staff, and faculty, while less than half (40.2%) agreed that the community promoted their social development. Thus, there was overall stronger agreement that the program's mission was being met among the faculty and staff than there was among students.

It should be noted that these findings represent participants' perceptions, and do not measure whether learning and personal growth actually increased as a result of the program. In order to do so, further research would need to be done. For instance, a follow-up study may compare various measures of learning and personal growth among two similar institutions, one that has a living-learning model and one that does not.

**Research Question Two**

The second research question was: Does the higher level of staffing and personalized interactions between students, staff, and faculty within the residential living-learning community model translate to a greater sense of safety, security, and satisfaction of stakeholders within the residential colleges? The existence of personalized interactions was strongly supported by the findings that emerged from the student, RA, and housekeeping and mechanic employee surveys.

Of the students surveyed, 75.7% felt a sense of familiarity from RCDs, RAs, and FFs; 67.9% felt a sense of concern from those same faculty and staff; 62.8% felt comfort in approaching them. Regarding the relationship between students and housekeeping employees, 70.6% of students felt familiar with their housekeeper, 93.4% trusted their housekeeper's work, and 76.6% felt a sense of safety from the presence of the

housekeeper. Regarding the relationship between students and mechanic employees, only 49.3% felt a sense of familiarity with their mechanic, 87.7% trusted their mechanic's work, and 67.6% felt a greater sense of security and safety from their mechanic's presence.

These findings support that most, but not all, students felt a sense of personalization from the faculty and staff within their living-learning community. Therefore, this is an area where the program may be improved by reaching a greater majority of students. Also, a greater percentage of students reported trust in their housekeeper's and mechanic's work than a sense of familiarity with either staff member. Therefore, even though students did not necessarily have a high level of personalized interactions with the staff members, they were still able to appreciate the thoroughness of their work.

From the perspective of the RAs, the vast majority felt a sense of familiarity with housekeeping employees (92.0%) and mechanic employees (92.0%). This may be due to the fact that RAs are often responsible for communicating with the staff members when housekeeping or mechanic concerns arise. Of those surveyed, 76.0% of RAs felt their role facilitated interactions between students, faculty and staff. Given that this is one of the essential roles of the RAs, this may point to another area for improvement for the program in that RAs be well-equipped to fulfill the purpose of their role within the living-learning community.

Next, from the perspective of the housekeeping and mechanic employees, 87.1% of housekeeping and 85.7% of mechanic employees agreed that having a permanent building assignment resulted in a more personal relationship with students. Relatedly,

88.7% of housekeeping and 85.7% of mechanic employees agreed that students trust staff. Thus, from the housekeeping and mechanic employee perspective, their assignment to one building allowed them to build more personalized relationships with students, and in turn resulted in a feeling of being trusted by the students.

Lastly, key themes of the qualitative findings also supported the answer to this question. For instance, FFs described one of their central motivations to work in a residential community as the desire to connect with students, and that their role resulted in both destigmatization of faculty and community building. Further, RCDs as an asset to students was informed by the subtheme of student safety, as was the theme of RAs as an asset to students. Thus, from the perspectives of the faculty and staff involved in the living-learning community, their role does indeed contribute to a greater level of safety, security, and satisfaction among stakeholders.

**Research Question Three**

The third and final research question was: Does the integrated living-learning community model at the research site create an environment that promotes job satisfaction and long-term retention among housekeeping and mechanic employees? The vast majority of housekeeping employees (85.5%) and mechanic employees (85.7%) preferred to have permanent building assignments, and agreed that this resulted in personal relationships with students (87.1%, 85.7%) and improved work performance (85.5%, 85.7%).

However, in order to answer this research question, these findings can be compared to the factors that housekeeping and mechanic employees identified as the key factors in promoting long-term retention. The top three factors that the highest

percentage of housekeeping employees identified as driving factors in long-term retention were job security (60.8%), ease or pace of duties (25.0%), and permanent building assignments (21.1%). Of the mechanic employees, the top three factors that the highest percentage of participants identified as driving factors in long-term retention were permanent building assignments (66.7%), job security (57.1%), and appreciation from students (50.0%). Thus, having a permanent building assignment was an important factor for both housekeeping and mechanic employees, though it appeared to be more important to mechanic employees than housekeeping employees. Other factors were more important to the housekeeping employees in particular, namely job security and ease or pace of duties.

Lastly, job satisfaction among housekeeping and mechanic employees was best illustrated by their agreement with the importance of various work-life qualities. The work-life qualities that the highest percentage of housekeeping employees identified as important were: Satisfaction with medical benefits (93.5%), pride in job performance (93.6%), familiarity with students and staff (88.7%), and job security (88.7%). The work-life qualities that the highest percentage of mechanic employees identified as important were: pride in job performance (85.7%), familiarity with students and staff (74.4%), and job security (71.4%). Certain factors, such as familiarity with students and staff, can be directly linked to the living-learning model. Other factors, such as job security and pride and job performance, can be linked indirectly. Given their permanent building assignments, housekeeping and mechanic employees may take greater pride in their work given that they are personally responsible for the care of specific facilities on a daily basis. This may also result in a sense of job security if they sense that the care of

their building, and the students, RAs, RCDs, and FFs that work there, rely upon their work. Further research may investigate further into why housekeeping and mechanic employees feel a sense of job security, other than having permanent building assignments.

## Recommendations for the Program

The following section provides the researcher's recommendations for the program. It is heavily informed by the two themes that emerged from the qualitative data analysis: How the program has been measured in the past and how the living-learning model can improve in the future. This section is also informed by the researcher's own reflections upon integration of the descriptive and qualitative findings. The key recommendations provided are regarding assessment, strategic design of physical space, support for upperclassmen, and staff retention.

### Assessment

According to the theme of how the program has been measured in the past, the research site has used student surveys, staff surveys, and benchmarking with similar institutions. The student surveys are used both to assess satisfaction and to assess learning outcomes of the living-learning model, while the staff surveys are used to collect data from RAs, RCDs, FFs, and FAs. The housekeeping and mechanic employees contribute to student safety and satisfaction, and are valued members of the living-learning community. Therefore, the program should continue assessment of its stakeholders, but should include the housekeeping and mechanic employees. Their assignment to permanent buildings is unique to the research site, and should be featured as a distinguishing factor of the program.

**Strategic Design of Physical Space**

In addition, the theme of how the living-learning community model can be improved in the future emerged from interviews across the board of the leadership, FFs and FAs, and RCDs and RAs. Subthemes that emerged included physical space, more casual interaction between faculty and students, support beyond the first year, and academic integration. The need to continually improve the physical space was supported by comments on the need to renovate or replace older dorm-style halls, update suite-style residential colleges, ensure there is a FF apartment and seminar room in every residential college, and potentially decrease the size of the residential college to create even greater intimacy. Therefore, the program leaders should continually be planning to update and renovate the physical space, and should do so strategically to align with the goals of the living-learning community.

The desire for more casual interaction between faculty and students emerged from reflections on how unplanned, unexpected events turned out to be the most interesting. One FF named this the ‘chips and salsa notion’ in that casual interactions can result in more natural conversations. Therefore, the program leaders should consider how the physical space or program structure can be designed to foster this. One example is to integrate communal kitchen areas where faculty, staff and students might naturally congregate.

Academic integration also emerged as a subtheme. This was described as a need to even further integrate living and learning so students do not view their lives as segregated. Suggestions were to teach courses in the residential colleges, connect FAs more with the courses, and involve RAs more in academic programs. Therefore, the

program leaders may investigate ways to further integrate living and learning at the research site, and should begin with the specific suggestions provided from the interviews.

**Support for Upperclassmen**

In addition, the need for increased support beyond the first year emerged as a subtheme of how to improve the model in the future. The program was described as 'first-year centric' by one RCD. This study did not include upperclassmen, but does point to a need for future research. It is presumable that the needs and desires of upperclassmen differ from those of underclassmen. Therefore, program leaders should assess the needs and desires of upperclassmen, and use this information to drive the evolution of the program for all grade levels.

**Staff Retention**

Retention of housekeeping and mechanic employees is a strength of the living-learning community. In order to maintain or further enhance staff retention, program leaders should consider the work-life elements that were important or unimportant to housekeeping and mechanic employees. For housekeeping employees, job security, ease or pace of duties, and permanent buildings were most important. In contrast, weekends off, opportunities to work overtime, or appreciation from students were not identified as important factors in long-term retention. For mechanic employees, permanent building assignments, job security, and appreciation from students were most important, whereas hourly pay, time-off benefits, health benefits, retirement benefits, tuition reimbursement, ease or pace of duties, set work hours, and paid holiday time off, weekends off, and opportunities to work overtime were not important. Therefore, program leaders should

use this data to attract and retain employees. Notably, this may be somewhat challenging given that certain benefits are likely applied across the board to all staff at the institution, which is comprised of over 13,000 employees (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, 2016). However, when recruiting potential employees specific to housekeeping and mechanic positions, these work-life qualities may be emphasized or de-emphasized.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Ample opportunities exist for further research on the effectiveness of living-learning communities. Given the delimitation of this study to one site of a top-tier Midwestern university, further studies may investigate living-learning models at other types of institutions in terms of location, size, and scope. The effects of living-learning communities on student retention at other institutions should be included, particularly at those where retention rates are lower than those often exhibited at top-tier institutions.

In addition, the findings of this study represent participants' perceptions, and do not measure whether learning and personal growth actually increased as a result of the program. In order to do so, further research would need to be done. For instance, a follow-up study may compare various measures of learning and personal growth among two similar institutions, one that has a living-learning model and one that does not. Or, another study may compare learning and personal growth of two cohorts of students at one institution—those that participated in the living-learning community and those that did not. However, the latter study would not be feasible at the research site used in this study given that all freshmen are required to live on-campus and participate in the living-learning community.

Regarding retention of staff, further research is needed to investigate any elements contributing to job security other than permanent building placements. This could be achieved with a follow-up study at the same research site used in this study. This follow-up study would be warranted given the important of job security to both housekeeping and mechanic employees. Further research should also quantify the turnover rate of housekeeping and mechanic employees at colleges and universities, especially given that this type of data is highly limited and typically grouped within the much larger industry of hospitality.

Lastly, further research is needed to provide a cost-benefit analysis of the living-learning model at the study site. It is presumable that the model incurs a significant number of costs, such as updates to the physical spaces, high staffing levels for housekeeping and mechanic employees, salaries for RCDs and RAs, and apartments for FFs. Financial benefits may include retention of students, reduced staff turnover, and relatively high charges for on-campus living given the uniqueness of the model. However, these factors have yet to be calculated in a formal cost-to-benefit analysis, and would provide meaningful information to the operating budget of the institution.

**Conclusions**

The living-learning community model at the research site is effectively promoting student learning and personal growth, facilitating a greater sense of safety, security, and satisfaction of its stakeholders, and contributing to the job satisfaction and retention of its housekeeping and mechanic employees. The integrated qualitative and descriptive findings of this study support that the living-learning community is upholding its mission, as noted in Washington University in St. Louis (2017d), to “provide a safe environment

that encourages learning and personal growth in an inclusive community that empowers and challenges our residents" (Mission statement, para. 1).

A key factor that separates this living-learning community model from those at benchmark institutions is the permanent building assignments of housekeeping and mechanic employees. For students, this has resulted in a greater sense of familiarity, safety, and security. For housekeeping and mechanic employees, this has contributed to job satisfaction and long-term retention. Given the uniqueness of this factor, it should be promoted as a distinguishing element of the program, and may also be used to recruit and retain future housekeeping and mechanic employees.

Despite the high reputation of the living-learning community at this research site, no program is perfect. Opportunities for improvement include use of ongoing assessment methods that recognize housekeeping and mechanic employees as stakeholders, design of physical space to further enhance the mission of the program, and further support for upperclassmen students. Staff recruitment and retention may also be improved by considering the factors that are of greater or lesser importance to the existing housekeeping and mechanic employees.

**Summary**

This study was a mixed-methods, single case, case study of a living-learning program at a top-tier, Midwestern university. The purpose of this study was twofold: to explore the effectiveness of an undergraduate residential living-learning community at a top-tier university in regards to student satisfaction and interaction, and to investigate elements of staff job satisfaction and long-term retention of housekeeping and mechanic

employees. Data collection involved surveys, one-on-one interviews, or focus group interviews of key stakeholders.

Three research questions informed the purpose of the study. The first research question asked whether the living-learning model provided an environment that encouraged learning and personal growth. Both the qualitative and descriptive findings supported that yes, the model does encourage learning and personal growth, but that there is still room for improvement, especially by contributing to students' social development. The second research question asked whether the higher level of staffing among stakeholders resulted in a greater sense of safety, security, and satisfaction. Again, both the qualitative and descriptive findings supported that the model does so effectively, especially for housekeeping and mechanic employees. The third research question asked whether the model supported job satisfaction and long-term retention among housekeeping and mechanic employees. The surveys of these employees indicated that yes, the living-learning model, and especially having a permanent building assignment, contributed to job satisfaction and retention.

In order to further improve the program, the researcher provided a few key recommendations. Assessment of the program in the future should recognize housekeeping and mechanic employees as stakeholders in the living-learning community; these staff should be surveyed regularly, as are the students, RAs, RCDs, and FFs. Next, the physical space should continue to be updated, and should be strategically designed to maximize integration of living and learning, as well as casual student-faculty interactions. Given the focus of the model on first and second-year students, the program may improve by assessing the needs and desires of its upperclassmen, and designing programming

accordingly. Lastly, though staff retention is already a strength at this institution, further recruitment and retention efforts of housekeeping and mechanic employees may take into account the factors that are of more or less importance to this population.

Further research on living-learning models is needed. Studies may investigate the living-learning models at other types of institutions, explore actual measures of learning and personal growth beyond mere perceptions, and further study elements contributing to job security of housekeeping and mechanic employees. At the same study site, a worthwhile follow-up student would be to conduct a cost-benefit analysis of the entire program from a financial perspective.

Overall, the living-learning model at this study site is upholding its mission. The institution may serve as a role model for peer institutions that also wish to building a similar model. In order to ensure future prosperity, program leaders should continue to assess how effectively the mission and goals are being met.

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## Appendix A

## Permission to use the Research Site: Students, Staff, and Faculty Interviews and Focus Groups

Washington University in St. Louis

Office of Residential Life

January 4, 2015

To whom it may concern:

I fully support Justin Linsenmeyer's study of students' and employees' satisfaction of the living learning community. He has my permission to conduct his surveys, interviews, and focus groups at Washington University in Saint Louis.

Sincerely,

Shruti Desai

Associate Director of Residential Life

Washington University in St. Louis, Campus Box 1250, 6515 Wydown Boulevard, St. Louis, Missouri 63130-4899
(314) 935-5050. *Fax:* (314) 935-4001, http://www.reslife.wustl.edu

## Appendix B

## Permission to use Research Site: Mechanic Surveys

Washington University in St. Louis

Office of Residential Life

January 4, 2015

To whom it may concern:

I fully support Justin Linscmeyer's study of students' and employees' satisfaction of the living learning community. He has my permission to conduct his surveys, interviews, and focus groups at Washington University in Saint Louis.

Sincerely,

Scott Wagganer

Manager, Housing Facilities & Services

Washington University in St. Louis, Campus Box 1250, 6515 Wydown Boulevard, St. Louis, Missouri 63130-4899
(314) 935-5050, Fax: (314) 935-4001, http://www.reslife.wustl.edu

## Appendix C

## Permission to use the Research Site: Housekeeping Survey

Washington University in St. Louis

Office of Residential Life

January 4, 2015

To whom it may concern:

I fully support Justin Linsenmeyer's study of students' and employees' satisfaction of the living learning community. He has my permission to conduct his surveys, interviews, and focus groups at Washington University in Saint Louis.

Sincerely,

Curt Harres

Director of Housing, Assistant Director of Residential Life

Washington University in St. Louis, Campus Box 1250, 6515 Wydown Boulevard, St. Louis, Missouri 63105-2298
(314) 935-5050, FAX: (314) 935-4001, http://reslife.wustl.edu

# Appendix D

## Adult Consent Form – Survey

Lindenwood University
School of Education
209 S. Kingshighway
St. Charles, Missouri 63301

**Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities**

"A mixed methods study of a Midwestern university's residential life living-learning community program, its contribution to student and employee satisfaction, and employee retention."

Principal Investigator: Justin Linsenmeyer Phone Number / Email: 314.479.1351 / jpl070@lionmail.lindenwood.edu

Participant Name: _____

Contact phone number or email address: _____

1. You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Justin Linsenmeyer under the guidance of Dr. Shane Williamson. The purpose of this research is to understand your satisfaction level of the residential life living-learning community model at this university.
2. Your participation will involve completing an anonymous online survey and the amount of time involved in your participation will be 10-15 minutes in length.
3. There are no anticipated risks associated with this research.
4. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study. However, your participation will contribute to the knowledge about satisfaction levels of the residential life living-learning community model.
5. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in this research study or to withdraw your consent at any time. You may choose not to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or to withdraw.
6. We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. As part of this effort, your identity will not be revealed in any publication or presentation that may result from this study and the information collected will remain in the possession of the investigator in a safe location.
7. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the Investigator, Justin Linsenmeyer / 314.479.1351, or the Supervising Faculty, Dr. Shane Williamson / 636.949.4444. You may also ask questions of or state concerns regarding your participation to the Lindenwood Institutional Review Board (IRB) through contacting Dr. Jann Weitzel, Vice President for Academic Affairs at 636-949-4846.

**I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I will also be given a copy of this consent form for my records. I consent to my participation in the research described above.**

_____ _____

**Participant's Signature Date** **Participant's Printed Name**

_____ _____

**Signature of Principal Investigator Date** **Principal Investigator's Printed Name**

Revised 1-21-2010

# Appendix E

## Adult Consent Form – Interview

Lindenwood University
School of Education
209 S. Kingshighway
St. Charles, Missouri 63301

**Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities**

"A mixed methods study of a Midwestern university's residential life living-learning community program, its contribution to student and employee satisfaction, and employee retention."

Principal Investigator: Justin Linsenmeyer Phone Number / Email: 314.479.1351 / jpl070@lionmail.lindenwood.edu

Participant Name: _____

Contact phone number or email address: _____

1. You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Justin Linsenmeyer under the guidance of Dr. Shane Williamson. The purpose of this research is to understand your satisfaction level of the residential life living-learning community model at this university.
2. Your participation will involve participating in a face-to-face interview and the amount of time involved in your participation will be 45 minutes to 1 hour in length.
3. There are no anticipated risks associated with this research.
4. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study. However, your participation will contribute to the knowledge about satisfaction levels of the residential life living-learning community model.
5. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in this research study or to withdraw your consent at any time. You may choose not to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or to withdraw.
6. We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. As part of this effort, your identity will not be revealed in any publication or presentation that may result from this study and the information collected will remain in the possession of the investigator in a safe location.
7. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the Investigator, Justin Linsenmeyer / 314.479.1351, or the Supervising Faculty, Dr. Shane Williamson / 636.949.4728. You may also ask questions of or state concerns regarding your participation to the Lindenwood Institutional Review Board (IRB) through contacting Dr. Jann Weitzel, Vice President for Academic Affairs at 636-949-4846.

**I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I will also be given a copy of this consent form for my records. I consent to my participation in the research described above.**

_____ _____

**Participant's Signature Date** **Participant's Printed Name**

_____ _____

**Signature of Principal Investigator Date** **Principal Investigator's Printed Name**

Revised 1-21-2010

# Appendix F

## Adult Consent Form – Focus Group Interview

Lindenwood University
School of Education
209 S. Kingshighway
St. Charles, Missouri 63301

**Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities**

"A mixed methods study of a Midwestern university's residential life living-learning community program, its contribution to student and employee satisfaction, and employee retention."

Principal Investigator: Justin Linsenmeyer Phone Number / Email: 314.479.1351 / jpl070@lionmail.lindenwood.edu

Participant Name: _____

Contact phone number or email address: _____

1. You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Justin Linsenmeyer under the guidance of Dr. Shane Williamson. The purpose of this research is to understand your satisfaction level of the residential life living-learning community model at this university.
2. Your participation will involve participating in a face-to-face focus group and the amount of time involved in your participation will be 45 minutes to 1 hour in length.
3. There are no anticipated risks associated with this research.
4. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study. However, your participation will contribute to the knowledge about satisfaction levels of the residential life living-learning community model.
5. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in this research study or to withdraw your consent at any time. You may choose not to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or to withdraw.
6. We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. As part of this effort, your identity will not be revealed in any publication or presentation that may result from this study and the information collected will remain in the possession of the investigator in a safe location.
7. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the Investigator, Justin Linsenmeyer / 314.479.1351, or the Supervising Faculty, Dr. Shane Williamson / 636.949.4728. You may also ask questions of or state concerns regarding your participation to the Lindenwood Institutional Review Board (IRB) through contacting Dr. Jann Weitzel, Vice President for Academic Affairs at 636-949-4846.

**I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I will also be given a copy of this consent form for my records. I consent to my participation in the research described above.**

_____ _____

**Participant's Signature Date** **Participant's Printed Name**

_____ _____

**Signature of Principal Investigator Date** **Principal Investigator's Printed Name**

Revised 1-21-2010

## Appendix G

### Survey – Sophomore Students

**Purpose:** The purpose of this survey is to understand your satisfaction level of the residential life living-learning community model at this university.

**Instructions:** Each statement is followed by a choice of responses. Please choose one response that most closely corresponds to how you feel about each statement. There is also space provided for comments. All information you provide in this survey will be kept confidential and your participation will remain completely anonymous.

**General Question:** Please type in your response to the following:

1. Prior to attending this institution would you have considered yourself an introvert or extrovert? (click on one or the other)

2. My gender is: (text box)

3. The country I lived in prior to attending this university was? (text box)

4. What is your religious preference? (text box)

5. Were you part of a sports team at this institution during your Freshman year? (yes/no)

6. Did you participate in theater, dance, or other social clubs at this institution during your Freshman year? (yes/no)

7. After completing your Freshman year at this institution, would you consider yourself an introvert or extrovert? (click on one or the other)

**Scale:** Please use this scale for the following statements regarding your living-learning community experience during your Freshman year:

(1) Strongly Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Indifferent (4) Agree (5) Strongly Agree

**Also please note the following when reading each statement:**
**Resident Advisors (RAs), Resident College Directors (RCDs), and Faculty Fellows (FFs)**

**1.** My residential college fostered an environment that helped me connect with students, staff, and faculty.

**2.** I know who my housekeeper is either by face, name, or story.

**3.** It is important to me to know my housekeeper by face, name, or story.

**4.** I know who my building mechanic is either by face, name, or story.

**5.** It is important to me to know my building mechanic by face, name, or story.

**6.** My housekeeper is friendly.

**7.** My housekeeper is approachable.

**8.** My building mechanic is friendly.

**9.** My building mechanic is approachable.

**10.** I trust the housekeeper that cleans inside my suite, on my floor, or in my building.

**11.** I trust the building mechanic that works in my building.

**12.** Having the same housekeeper assigned to clean inside my suite, on my floor, or inside my building for the entire year gives me a sense of security/safety.

**13.** Having the same building mechanic assigned to work in my building for the entire year gives me a sense of security/safety.

**14.** It is important for my housekeeper to know how much they are appreciated by me and/or my suitemate(s).

**15.** Housekeepers should be appreciated for the services they provide to students.

**16.** It is important for my building mechanic to know how much they are appreciated by me and/or my suitemate(s).

**17.** Building mechanics should be appreciated for the services they provide to students.

**18.** Students, RAs, and RCDs recognize housekeepers for services they provide during the year.

**19.** Students, RAs, and RCDs recognize building mechanics for the services they provide throughout the year.

**20.** RAs, RCDs, and/or FFs played a role in my social development throughout the year.

**21.** RAs, RCDs, and/or FFs have a genuine concern for my integration and social development in our living-learning community.

**22.** I met many new students through social gatherings organized by my RAs, RCD, and or FF during my freshman year.

**23.** RAs, RCDs, and/or FFs have a genuine concern for me as a person.

**24.** RAs, RCDs, and/or FFs know me by face, name, or story.

**25.** I feel comfortable going to my RAs, RCDs, and/or FFs to address my concerns.

**26.** RAs, RCDs, and/or FFs offer opportunities throughout the year for students to socialize in small groups creating a safe learning environment outside the classroom.

**27.** The opportunity to interact with FFs in my living-learning community makes me feel more comfortable socializing with other Staff and Faculty members around campus.

**28.** Freshman are given opportunities and encouraged to participate in social gatherings in the Residential Halls.

**29.** The Office of Residential Life in partnership with the First-Year Center made me feel welcomed and part of the university family at freshman move-in.

**30.** The quality of my living-learning facility has exceeded my expectations.

**31.** Being required to live on campus in a residential house factored into my decision to attend this university.

**32.** Prior to applying to this university, dorm amenities and services offered by the housing staff were considered and factored into my decision to attend this university.

**33.** Prior to applying to this university, the opportunity to live in a residential community with faculty and staff factored into my decision to attend this university.

**Prior to applying to this university, please list five (5) of the following choices in order of importance related to your decision to attend this institution (with 1 being the most important, 2 being the second most important, and so on):**

LGBTQA Friendly Dining Services In-Suite Cleaning Services
Greek Life Newness of Buildings Newness of Furniture/Amenities
Student Group/Club Options Live-In Faculty Fellow Program RA/RCD Interactions Other (write in answer)

**1.** _____

**2.** _____

**3.** _____

**4.** _____

**5.** _____

**Please write additional comments in the space provided here:**

_____
_____
_____

## Appendix H

## Survey – Resident Advisors (RAs)

**Purpose:** The purpose of this survey is to understand your satisfaction level of the residential life living-learning community model at this university.

**Instructions:** Each statement is followed by a choice of responses. Please choose one response that most closely corresponds to how you feel about each statement. There is also space provided for comments. All information you provide in this survey will be kept confidential and your participation will remain completely anonymous.

**General Question:** Please type in your response to the following:

1. My gender is: _____
2. Which country did you graduate High School? _____
3. What is your religious preference? _____
4. Were you part of a sports team in High School? _____
5. Were you part of a sports team at this institution during your Freshman year? _____
6. Did you participate in theater or other social clubs in High School? _____
7. Did you participate in theater or other social clubs at this institution during your Freshman year? _____
8. Prior to attending this institution would you have considered yourself an introvert or extrovert? _____
9. After completing your Freshman year at this institution, would you consider yourself an introvert or extrovert? _____
10. At the start of your Freshman year, when you moved into your suite, how many other Freshman students did you know that were also attending this institution? _____

**11.** At the end of your Freshman year, as you left for summer break, do you feel living in the university's living-learning community fostered an environment that helped you connect with new students, staff, and faculty? _____

**12.** Did your Freshman and or Sophomore RA/RCD inspire you to apply to be an RA? _____

**Scale:** Please use this scale for the following statements regarding your living-learning community experience during your Freshman year:

(1) Strongly Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Indifferent (4) Agree (5) Strongly Agree

Also please note the following when reading each statement:
Resident Advisors (RAs), Resident College Directors (RCDs), and Faculty Fellows (FFs)

**1.** I know who my housekeeper is either by face, name, or story.
**2.** I know who my building mechanic is either by face, name, or story.
**3.** It is important for RAs to know housekeepers working in the Residential House.
**4.** It is important for RAs to know building mechanics working in the Residential House.
**5.** RAs have a positive impact on freshman and sophomore students' social engagement within the living-learning community.
**6.** RAs play a critical role in facilitating interactions between students and faculty/staff.
**7.** RAs serve in a leadership capacity for students.
**8.** Students seek out RAs for guidance.
**9.** RAs build and sustain relationships with students throughout the school year.
**10.** FFs involvement with students' lives within the living-learning community positively impacts students socially and academically.
**11.** FFs living within the living-learning community positively impacts student socially and academically.

**12.** There are numerous opportunities throughout the year for students to interact with FFs in a non-academic social setting such as inside a FFs apartment during a group dinner.

**13.** Being a RA will help me in future leadership roles.

**14.** Dorm amenities and services offered by the university housing staff were considered and factored into my decision to attend this university.

**15.** To live in a residential community with faculty and staff was a unique opportunity and factored into my decision to attend this university.

**Prior to applying to this university, please list five (5) of the following choices in order of importance you which impacted your decision to attend this institution (with 1 being the most important, 2 being the second most important, and so on):**

LGBTQA Friendly Dining Services In-Suite Cleaning Services
Greek Life Newness of Buildings Newness of Furniture/Amenities
Student Group/Club Options Live-In Faculty Fellow Program RA/RCD Interactions Other (write in answer)

**1.** _____

**2.** _____

**3.** _____

**4.** _____

**5.** _____

**Please write additional comments in the space provided here:**

_____

_____

_____

## Appendix I

## Survey – Mechanics

**Purpose:** The purpose of this survey is to understand your satisfaction level of the residential life living-learning community model at this university.

**Instructions:** Each statement is followed by a choice of responses. Please choose one response that most closely corresponds to how you feel about each statement. There is also space provided for comments. All information you provide in this survey will be kept confidential and your participation will remain completely anonymous.

**Scale:** Please use this scale for the following statements:
(1) Strongly Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Indifferent (4) Agree (5) Strongly Agree

**1.** I prefer to have my own building permanently assigned to me.

**2.** Having a permanent building/zone assignment allows me to know the students more personally.

**3.** Having a permanent assignment in the same building/zone allows me to perform my duties more consistently with greater attention to detail resulting in better overall upkeep for students.

**4.** I know students or staff in my assigned area by face, name, or story.

**5.** I take pride in performing my job well.

**6.** I feel secure in my position (job security).

**7.** Student satisfaction is important to me.

**8.** My hourly wage is appropriate for the work I do.

**9.** The university's medical benefits are comprehensive and suit my family's needs.

**10.** The retirement benefits program offered by the university is important to me.

**11.** Qualifying for and utilizing the university's tuition reimbursement benefits offered is a driving factor to my long-term retention.

**12.** My supervisor is concerned about my personal wellbeing.

**13.** Students are concerned about my personal wellbeing.

**14.** Students trust me.

**15.** The university values me.

**16.** I feel like I am part of a great team organization.

**17.** I feel like students appreciate me.

**18.** It makes me feel good when students know me by face, name, or story.

**19.** Students will have greater trust in me if they know me by face, name, or story.

**20.** It is important for me to know students by face, name, or story.

**21.** It is important for me to know staff by face, name, or story.

**22.** I intend to continue my employment at this university in my current position for at least the next three years.

**Please list five (5) of the following choices, in order of importance, that were valuable to you when you applied to this institution or kept you as a long-term employee (with 1 being the most important, 2 being the second most important, and so on):**

Job Security Hourly Pay Time-off Benefits (vacation/sick) Health Benefits Retirement Benefits Tuition Reimbursement Benefits Ease/Pace of Performing Duties Set Work Hours (for example: Monday – Friday / 8am – 4:30pm) Paid Holiday Time-off Having Weekends Off Opportunities to Work Overtime Feel Appreciated by Students Permanent Building Assignment Other (write in answer)

**1.** _____

**2.** _____

**3.** _____

**4.** _____

**5.** _____

**Please circle all factors below that influence your long-term retention:**

☐ Hourly Pay

☐ Time-off benefits (includes sick/vacation time)

☐ Health benefits

☐ Retirement benefits

☐ Tuition reimbursement benefits

☐ Ease/pace of performing daily duties

☐ Job security

☐ Set working hours (for example: Monday – Friday / 8am – 4:30pm)

☐ Having a building or zone permanently assigned to me

☐ Feel appreciated by students/staff

☐ Opportunities to work overtime shifts

☐ Paid holiday time off

☐ Having weekends off regularly

**Please write additional comments in the space provided here:**

_____

_____

_____

## Appendix J

## Survey – Housekeepers

**Purpose:** The purpose of this survey is to understand your satisfaction level of the residential life living-learning community model at this university.

**Instructions:** Each statement is followed by a choice of responses. Please choose one response that most closely corresponds to how you feel about each statement. There is also space provided for comments. All information you provide in this survey will be kept confidential and your participation will remain completely anonymous.

**Scale:** Please use this scale for the following statements:
(1) Strongly Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Indifferent (4) Agree (5) Strongly Agree

**1.** I prefer to have my own building permanently assigned to me.

**2.** Having a permanent building/zone assignment allows me to know students more personally.

**3.** Having a permanent assignment in the same building allows me to perform my duties more consistently with greater attention to detail resulting in better living conditions for students.

**4.** I know students or staff in my assigned area by face, name, or story.

**5.** I take pride in performing my job well.

**6.** I feel secure in my position (job security).

**7.** Student satisfaction is important to me.

**8.** My hourly wage is appropriate for the work I do.

**9.** The university's medical benefits are comprehensive and suit my family's needs.

**10.** The retirement benefits program offered by the university is important to me.

**11.** Qualifying for and utilizing the university's tuition reimbursement benefits offered is a driving factor to my long-term retention.

**12.** My supervisor is concerned about my personal wellbeing.

**13.** Students are concerned about my personal wellbeing.

**14.** Students trust me.

**15.** The university values me.

**16.** I feel like I am part of a great team organization.

**17.** I feel like students appreciate me.

**18.** It makes me feel good when students know me by face, name, or story.

**19.** Students will have greater trust in me if they know me by face, name, or story.

**20.** It is important for me to know students by face, name, or story.

**21.** It is important for me to know staff by face, name, or story.

**22.** I intend to continue my employment at this university in my current position for at least the next three years.

**Please list five (5) of the following choices, in order of importance, that were valuable to you when you applied to this institution or kept you as a long-term employee (with 1 being the most important, 2 being the second most important, and so on):**

Job Security Hourly Pay Time-off Benefits (vacation/sick) Health Benefits Retirement Benefits Tuition Reimbursement Benefits Ease/Pace of Performing Duties Set Work Hours (for example: Monday – Friday / 8am – 4:30pm) Paid Holiday Time-off Having Weekends Off Opportunities to Work Overtime Feel Appreciated by Students Permanent Building Assignment Other (write in answer)

**1.** _____

**2.** _____

**3.** _____

**4.** _____

**5.** _____

**Please circle all factors below that influence your long-term retention:**

☐ Hourly Pay

☐ Time-off benefits (includes sick/vacation time)

☐ Health benefits

☐ Retirement benefits

☐ Tuition reimbursement benefits

☐ Ease/pace of performing daily duties

☐ Job security

☐ Set working hours (for example: Monday – Friday / 8am – 4:30pm)

☐ Having a building or zone permanently assigned to me

☐ Feel appreciated by students/staff

☐ Opportunities to work overtime shifts

☐ Paid holiday time off

☐ Having weekends off regularly

**Please write additional comments in the space provided here:**

_____

_____

_____

## Appendix K

## Interview – Associate Dean of Students

**Purpose:** This interview is being conducted to obtain information that will help your employer identify facts that are important to you.

**Instructions:** Please respond honestly to the questions knowing that all information you provide in this interview will be kept confidential and your participation will remain completely anonymous.

**Questions:**

1. Discuss driving factors of your decision to spearhead the implementation of the Faculty Fellow program.
2. Discuss reasons you felt this intuition needed to develop a living-learning community model that included RAs, RCDs, FAs, and FFs.
3. Discuss examples of exceptional living-learning communities you studied to create the model in place at this institution.
4. Discuss key elements those programs offered in their living-learning communities you wanted incorporated in these residential colleges.
5. Discuss characteristics that set this living-learning model apart from other intuitions.
6. Discuss ways a RA is an asset to a first-year student.
7. Discuss the application, selection, and training process for a RA.
8. Discuss ways a RA impacts student experiences, encourages social interactions, and creates a sense of security within the living-learning community.
9. Discuss ways a RCD is an asset to a first-year student.
10. Discuss ways a RCD impacts student experiences, encourages social interactions, and creates a sense of security within the living-learning community.
11. Discuss ways a FF is an asset to a first-year student.
12. Discuss ways a FF impacts student experiences, encourages social interactions, and creates a sense of security within the living-learning community.

**13.** Discuss ways residential colleges are used to create a living-learning environment for students outside the classroom.

**14.** Discuss how you have measured success of the program in the past.

**15.** Discuss ways the living-learning community model can improve in the future.

## Appendix L

## Interview – Director of Residential Life

**Purpose:** This interview is being conducted to obtain information that will help your employer identify facts that are important to you.

**Instructions:** Please respond honestly to the questions knowing that all information you provide in this interview will be kept confidential and your participation will remain completely anonymous.

**Questions:**

1. Discuss ways transitioning from a traditional gang-style dorm setting to suite-style modern living-learning spaces has improved student's abilities to collaborate with staff, faculty, and grow socially.
2. Discuss ways assigning permanent housekeepers and building mechanics to residential houses or colleges throughout the living-learning community has impacted students as opposed to a traditional rent model of services offered.
3. Discuss how the results of increased financial burdens of additional staffing have led to increased student safety, security, and satisfaction of services in the living-learning community.
4. Discuss characteristics that set this living-learning model apart from other intuitions.
5. Discuss ways a RA is an asset to a first-year student.
6. Discuss ways a RA impacts student experiences, encourages social interactions, and creates a sense of security within the living-learning community.
7. Discuss ways a RCD impacts student experiences, encourages social interactions, and creates a sense of security within the living-learning community.
8. Discuss ways a FF is an asset to a first-year student.
9. Discuss ways a FF impacts student experiences, encourages social interactions, and creates a sense of security within the living-learning community.
10. Discuss ways residential colleges are used to create a living-learning environment for students outside the classroom.

**11.** Discuss how you have measured success of the program in the past.

**12.** Discuss ways the living-learning community model can improve in the future.

## Appendix M

## Interview – Dean of Students

**Purpose:** This interview is being conducted to obtain information that will help your employer identify facts that are important to you.

**Instructions:** Please respond honestly to the questions knowing that all information you provide in this interview will be kept confidential and your participation will remain completely anonymous.

**Questions:**

1. Discuss driving factors of your decision to transition from traditional gang-style dorm settings to suite-style modern living-learning spaces.
2. Discuss reasons you felt this intuition needed to develop a living-learning community model that included RAs, RCDs, FAs, and FFs.
3. Discuss your decision to increase staffing so that each building would be assigned permanent housekeepers and building mechanics.
4. Discuss how the results of increased financial burdens of additional staffing have led to increased student safety, security, and satisfaction of services in the living-learning community.
5. Discuss characteristics that set this living-learning model apart from other intuitions.
6. Discuss the significance of the RA to a first-year student.
7. Discuss ways a RA impacts student experiences, encourages social interactions, and creates a sense of security within the living-learning community.
8. Discuss ways a RA is an asset to a first-year student.
9. Discuss ways a RCD impacts student experiences, encourages social interactions, and creates a sense of security within the living-learning community.
10. Discuss ways a RCD is an asset to a first-year student.
11. Discuss ways a FF impacts student experiences, encourages social interactions, and creates a sense of security within the living-learning community.
12. Discuss ways a FF is an asset to a first-year student

**13.** Discuss ways residential colleges are used to create a living-learning environment for students outside the classroom.

**14.** Discuss how you have measured success of the program in the past.

**15.** Discuss ways the living-learning community model can improve in the future.

## Appendix N

## Focus Group Interview – Residential College Directors (RCDs)

**Purpose:** This interview is being conducted to obtain information that will help your employer identify facts that are important to you.

**Instructions:** Please respond honestly to the questions knowing that all information you provide in this interview will be kept confidential and your participation will remain completely anonymous.

**Questions:**

1. Discuss reasons you wanted to be part of this residential life living-learning community.
2. Discuss reasons why you chose to be a RCD.
3. Describe your primary role as a RCD and how do you go about achieving it.
4. Describe the significance of a RA and how do they help you connect with students? Or…how do you help them connect with students?
5. Describe the significance of a FF (or discuss your relationship with FFs) and how do they help you connect with students? Or…how do you help them connect with students?
6. Discuss ways the current living-learning community model impacts first-year students.
7. Discuss opportunities available to students living in our living-learning community model in terms of ways to develop social skills and grow outside the classroom.
8. Discuss the significance of the current staffing model and the impact it has on student growth both socially and academically.
9. Discuss ways a RA is an asset to a first-year student.
10. Discuss ways a RA impacts student experiences, encourages social interactions, and creates a sense of security within the living-learning community.
11. Discuss ways a RCD is an asset to a first-year student.

**12.** Discuss ways a RCD impacts student experiences, encourages social interactions, and creates a sense of security within the living-learning community.

**13.** Discuss ways a FF is an asset to a first-year student.

**14.** Discuss ways a FF impacts student experiences, encourages social interactions, and creates a sense of security within the living-learning community.

**15.** Discuss ways residential colleges are used to create a living-learning environment for students outside the classroom.

**16.** Discuss ways the living-learning community model can improve in the future.

## Appendix O

### Focus Group Interview – Faculty Fellows (FFs)

**Purpose:** This interview is being conducted to obtain information that will help your employer identify facts that are important to you.

**Instructions:** Please respond honestly to the questions knowing that all information you provide in this interview will be kept confidential and your participation will remain completely anonymous.

**Questions:**

1. Discuss reasons you wanted to be part of the residential life living-learning community at this institution as a Faculty Fellow...
2. Describe your primary role as a Faculty Fellow and how do you go about achieving it?
3. In what ways do you feel you served as a mentor to undergraduate residents and what percentage of students are you able to regularly have contact with out of your entire living-learning community?
4. How do you foster relations between you, your family, and the students in your residence hall?
5. In what ways did the students grow socially and or academically by the services you provided?
6. In what ways did you encourage residents to use you as an asset for information, referrals, and or advising?
7. What types of activities did you offer to students to create a sense of community in your residential college?
8. In what ways do you feel the training offered prepared you for taking on the challenge of being a FF?
9. In what ways did you help to improve the undergraduate experience through informal contact with students?

**10.** In what ways have housekeepers/mechanics impacted students in your living-learning community?

**11.** What roles did RAs and RCDs play in your integration within your residential college?

**12.** How have your RAs and or RCDs encouraged and fostered interactions between you and students?

**13.** What qualities are best suited in a FF to succeed in this position?

**14.** Would you recommend being a FF to a colleague? Why or why not?

**15.** In what ways did you grow as a person, faculty member, parent, etc. by serving in this role?

**16.** Now that you are no longer a FF, in retrospect, what do you wish you would have done earlier in the program or at any point in the program to improve communication and or to connect with more students?

**17.** What recommendations do you have for this program to grow in the future?

# Appendix P

## Institutional Review Board Approval

LINDENWOOD UNIVERSITY • ST. CHARLES, MISSOURI

### Educational Leadership - Prospectus

**Date** February 19, 2015

**Chair** Dr. Shane Williamson **Student** Justin Linsenmeyer

Justin Linsenmeyer,

Your prospectus research design has been approved.

Please, work with your chair to transfer information to your draft of the IRB protocol application. Include consent forms, permission notes, survey / interview / focus group questions, if appropriate.

When ready, your chair will submit the IRB Draft for review of items related to ethics and bias by the Research Design Council (swisdom@lindenwood.edu).

Thank you,

Sherrie Wisdom, EdD
for the Education Leadership Research Design Council
Associate Professor - Education Leadership
Supervisor of Graduate Research

## Appendix Q

## The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research Certificate of Completion

**Certificate of Completion**

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that **Justin Linsenmeyer** successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course “Protecting Human Research Participants”.

Date of completion: 02/29/2012

Certification Number: 879436

**Curriculum Vitae**

# JUSTIN P. LINSENMEYER

3311 LEMP AVENUE - SAINT LOUIS, MISSOURI 63118
PHONE 314.479.1351 • E-MAIL JUSTIN.LINSENMEYER@GMAIL.COM

## OBJECTIVE

Proven leaders seeks to utilize leadership, entrepreneurial, and educational skills to gain a position in higher education administration. Ambitious and creative strategic manager possesses a strong desire to teach and guide students and staff, serve the university, and contribute meaningful research during tenure as (position).

## EDUCATION

- Doctorate in Instructional Leadership, Emphasis in Higher Education Administration, Lindenwood University–St. Charles, Missouri, 2017 (anticipated)
- Master of Science in Hospitality and Tourism Management, Florida International University – Miami, Florida, 2009
- Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, Lindenwood University–St. Charles, Missouri, 2006

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Manager, Ameristar Casino Resort & Spa, St. Charles, Missouri, 2000 – 2007

- Ameristar Casinos, Inc. flagship property, largest Midwest casino.
- Managed several operations departments for $300M net revenue, 1,500 employee casino resort with 150,000 square feet gaming space, 3,000 slot machines, 100 table games and 8 restaurants.
- Responsible for creation and implementation of annual strategic guest service initiatives, department budgets, and training programs.
- Directly managed staff of 50 plus team members and supervisors daily, and as M.O.D. oversaw management of all departments and 1,500 team members throughout the property.
- Led in-depth strategy sessions for front of house operations, prepared action plans, and oversaw implementation of change programs.
- Worked with the Missouri Gaming Commission to ensure all local, state, and federal laws were followed daily.

Assistant Manager, Mandarin Oriental Hotel, Miami, Florida, 2007 – 2009

- AAA 5 Diamond Spa, AAA 5 Diamond Hotel, Mobile 5 Star Service Hotel.
- Oversaw staff of 25 team members, ensuring all service standards were met daily.
- Worked with executive management team to prepare for high-profile, 500-plus guest parties, as well as events for celebrities and foreign dignitaries generating $50,000 - $500,000 in revenue per event.
- Created and implemented a comprehensive vehicle movement tracking log used to monitor and evaluate efficiency of staff which positively impacted our ability to accurately forecast staffing.
- Conceived and integrated an elaborate parking system used for large events thus improving guest service and efficiency of staff, leading to a 30 percent decrease in labor and a significant increase in revenue.

Line Cook, Michy's Restaurant, Miami, Florida, 2007 – 2009

- Best New Restaurant 2006, Food & Wine Magazine.

- Top 50 Restaurants in the Country 2006, Gourmet Magazine.
- James Beard Award, Best Chef of the South 2008, Michelle Bernstein, Michy's chef/owner.
- Responsible for daily line station set-up, creating and plating food orders, as well as nightly kitchen clean-up.
- Assisted in daily food-prep tasks and received produce orders.

Production Assistant, CREAM the Company (Culinary Related Events and Marketing), Miami, Florida and New York, New York, 2007 – 2012

- Participating in managing high-end ticketed events consisting of 3,500 plus guests.
- Served as a point-of-contact to chefs and celebrities.
- Oversaw a staff of up to 25 volunteers daily.

Volunteer, Miami Children's Hospital, Miami, Florida, 2008 – 2009

- Volunteered weekly working with infants to teens.
- Held and fed babies, read stories to and played games with young children, and talked with teens while they were guests of the hospital.

Founder and President, STL Food Factory, St. Louis, Missouri, 2009 – Present

- Nonprofit organization offering free cooking classes and community garden set-up throughout the greater St. Louis region.
- Mission: Unite kids through food, culture, and education. Provide a fun and safe environment for each student to grow vegetables, cook food, and share meals together as a team.
- Provide resources, opportunities to cook, and life skills is a fundamental goal. Used food as a teaching tool to cook nutritious meals while learning about cultures from around the world.

Guest Service Agent, Four Seasons Hotel & Spa, St. Louis, Missouri, 2009 - 2010

- Only AAA 5 Diamond property in Missouri and one of four in Midwest.
- Assisted in all areas of hotel operations including reservations, front desk, concierge, and housekeeping.
- Provided exceptional hospitality ensuring service standards were met daily.

Overnight Auditor, M.O.D., Embassy Suites Hotel and Spa, St. Charles, Missouri, 2010 – 2012

- Oversee evening and night operations of 296 room property.
- Balance and post all daily revenue, complete end of day reports, balance cash receipts, make cash deposits, and handle all guest opportunities.
- Ensure safety and satisfaction of all guests.

Assistant Housekeeping Manager, Washington University in St. Louis, St. Louis, Missouri, 2012 – Present

- Responsible for managing day-to-day housekeeping services for Washington University in St. Louis' student housing facilities.
- Oversee cleaning services provided to approximately 4,500 undergraduate students who reside in over 30 on-campus residence halls and approximately 12 off-campus apartment facilities.
- Coordinate and manage cleaning services for all university residential and dining facilities as well as Summer Conferences and Programs and other Office spaces throughout campus.
- Recruit, select, train, manage, and evaluate seven full-time supervisors.
- Oversee the selection, training, management, and evaluation of nearly 70 full-time employees.
- Manage administrative needs of staff including payroll, benefits such as Family Medical Leave, and scheduling.
- Assist with planning and administering a nearly $3 million departmental budget.

## RESEARCH SKILLS / SCHOLARLY RESEARCH INTERESTS

Research Skills:

- Keen and Analytical: systematic, curious, inquisitive, imaginative, open minded, thinks on a micro and macro level.
- Patient and Clear Communicator: ability to remain calm, speak and write clearly, a people-person.

Scholarly Research Interests:

- How does a top-tier Midwestern university's living-learning community model impact long-term retention of housekeeping and mechanic staff?
- How does a top-tier Midwestern university's living-learning community model impact student satisfaction and promotes social growth?
- Does creating a detailed and structured daily cleaning structure lead to increased productivity and cost reduction or decreased morale of housekeeping staff?
- Promoting from within; goal setting, training, and development of future leaders.
- Best practices and leading trends in sustainability and cost reduction management.
- Effects of diversity and cultural awareness in the workforce/using food as a morale booster.
- Costs, deterrents and drivers of community development.
- Management style effectiveness in the workplace; team development.

## PROFESSIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL SKILLS

- Morally grounded. Tremendous ambition and drive balanced with exemplary ethics. Never satisfied with status quo, a change agent always in search of improvement and knowledge.
- Strong strategic thinker with a relentless dedication to and pursuit of excellence. A take-charge leader always increasing responsibility, constantly multitasking, and consistently meeting all deadlines.
- Outstanding listener, possessing the ability to communicate strategies, goals, and initiatives to all levels within an organization.
- Detail oriented and focused researcher with the ability to separate facts from opinions. Goal driven, professional, and able to discuss business management strategies with industry leaders.
- Proven ability to organize and deliver in-depth meetings to CEOs, corporate executives, property managers, line team members, and volunteers.
- Extensive experience using patience and tact when confronted with a difficult situation and when communicating to large and or hostile groups of people.
- Ability to manage complex interpersonal dynamics, including multicultural relationships.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Executive Leadership, Project Management and Consulting, Dealing with Difficult People, Keys to Effective Communication, Time Management, and various other leadership seminars and classes, St. Louis, MO 2002 – ongoing.
- ACUHO-I, NASPA, and ACPA annual conferences, 2012 – ongoing.
- National Restaurant Association; Restaurant Hotel/Motel Shows, Annual Conferences.
- Food & Beverage cooking classes, wine tastings and seminars, Annual Conferences/Trade Shows: Miami, Florida, Las Vegas, Nevada, and New York, New York
- Studied Abroad: Peru, Italy, and China
- Traveled: visited more than 20 countries spanning 5 continents. Continually seeking new travel opportunities and challenges, ongoing.

## GOALS

Professional Goals:

- Continue to learn, grow, and develop new leadership skills in an effort to become a more effective mentor, advisor, motivator, and an inspiring influence to others.

- Attend and present at educational conferences in an effort to learn from industry leaders and offer insight of the successes and failures housekeeping experienced during our transition.

Personal Goals:

- Continue traveling and exploring other cultures and societies. Complete my journey to visit each continent and all seven 'Wonders of the World.' Go on Mission at least once every 5 years.
- Take foreign language classes; learn Spanish (Latin American).
- Increase the scale of the private equity real estate holdings portfolio.
- Finalize bequest of art to local museum.
- Continue the mission of STL Food Factory to provide free cooking classes to children throughout our city.

## VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES / COMMUNITY SERVICES

- Youth Minister – U-City Family Church, St. Louis, Present – 2014
- Founder and President – STL Food Factory, St. Louis, Present – 2009
- Member, CARE Committee – Embassy Suites St. Charles, 2010 – 2009
- Bedside Buddy – Miami Children's Hospital, Miami 2009 – 2008
- Member, Ameristar Cares Charitable Giving Committee, Ameristar Casino St. Charles, 2006–04

## PERSONAL INFORMATION

- Enjoy traveling, studying design, art and photography, spending time in nature as well as, cooking, gardening, and most of all eating.
- Caucasian male, born in St. Louis, Missouri, July 11, 1982.
- Dr. Whitney Linsenmeyer, wife and Charles Michael Linsenmeyer, son.

## REFERENCES

- Mr. Curt Harres – Washington University in St. Louis
- Dr. Rob Wild – Washington University in St. Louis
- Mr. Randy Fisher – The Continental Companies, LLC
- Dr. Michael Hepner – St. Louis Community College