GT Living Learning Communities

January 2008 – December 2008

**Task Force:**
**Co-chairs:**
Dana Hartley (Dir. UG Studies)
Dan Morrison (Director Residential Life)

**Members (alphabetical order):**
Alex Becking (Housing)
Sarah Brackmann (Service Learning)
Steven Girardot (Success Programs)
Larry Jacobs (COE)
Monica Halka (Honors)
Danielle McDonald (Dean of Students Office)
Tom Morley (Math – Provost Task Force)
Usha Nair-Reichert (Econ)
Caroline Noyes (Office of Assessment)
Holly Shikano (Housing)
David Ward (Student – Provost Task Force)
Howard Wertheimer (Space Planning)
Georgia Tech’s mission is to “educate the leaders of a technological driven world.” As part of this goal Georgia Tech is creating an educational experience in which a student is engaged in an intellectual community promoting lifelong learning, leadership and service.

An important part of promoting this intellectual community is bringing faculty and students together pursue further conversation around topics beyond those in the classroom. Studies at Tech have shown that one of the greatest needs in student engagement at Tech is to strengthen the Faculty-Student Interaction and Community (See Appendix A for the Sophomore Year Task Force Report). Following up on these studies, we are developing two programs to address these issues. The two programs are:

One is a series of current event dinners with faculty. The other is Living Learning Communities (LLC). The LLC bring about faculty student interaction and create a community for both. The LLC goals are:

- Facilitating faculty student interaction outside of the classroom.
- Stronger student and faculty connection with community at Tech.
- Encourage a more engaging and inquiring approach to student learning.
- Enticing students to be more reflective in their learning.

These LLCs will not have course credit associated with them. This is true for a number of reasons:

- In the study that led to this program, students expressed a strong desire for “non-academic” contact with professors
- The student perspective that if the LLC is for course credit, they will limit the time involved to what they view as proportional to credit hours.
- The goal is to get students involved in a lifelong learning paradigm.

In this document you will find the design documents for these new Living Learning Communities.

1) The Faculty/Director Commitment
2) The Student Commitment
3) Administrative Components
4) Assessment
5) Funding
## Faculty/Director Commitment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coordinate and Attend</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Discussion</th>
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</table>
| **1) Retreat before classes begin for both Fall and Spring** | - This is for orientation and to establish cohort connections  
- Friday or Sunday or overnight | - Ice-breaking helps establish the community between all the students and with the faculty.  
- Housing can help with the ice-breaking activities, and retreat coordination. |
| **2) One programmatic “event” every other week** | - Related to the LLC subject.  
- To be designed in advance  
- Gives overall picture  
- Housing time to help coordinate | - This component is to accentuate the “Learning” component. Some of these should be within the living quarters, but others can be elsewhere  
- There will also be a student advisory council with each LLC. They will be charged with developing other “events”.  
- Faculty should plan to attend at least one “event” a week. |
| **3) A coffee/tea hour once a week** | - Same time and place each week  
- Time and place are based on what is convenient for the faculty and students | - This is to keep a continuous casual community relationship between the faculty and the students.  
- Suggested place: Living space; Suggested time 10 am or between 4-6pm. |
| **4) One special program/dinner at the end of each term** | - Support from Housing  
- Support from Student Advisory | - This serves as a celebration of the group as a whole, their involvement together, and their connection with their common interest in this LLC.  
- This also helps to tie everyone together at the end of a term, so the next one starts smoothly. |
| **5) Participation in Assessment** | - Completing Assessment Instruments | - See Assessment below for more information |
# Student Commitment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participate</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Discussion</th>
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<td>2) Programmatic “event” every week attendance at 10 events a semester.</td>
<td>• Related to the LLC subject.</td>
<td>• This component is to accentuate the “Learning” component. Some of these should be within the living quarters, but others can be elsewhere</td>
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<td>3) A coffee/tea hour attendance at least 2 times a month.</td>
<td>• Same time and place each week</td>
<td>• This is to keep a continuous casual community relationship between the faculty and the students.</td>
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<td>4) Program/dinner at the end of each term</td>
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<td>• This serves as a celebration of the group as a whole, their involvement together, and their connection with their common interest in this LLC.</td>
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### Administrative Components:

**Faculty Proposals and Student Applications**

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| Faculty Proposal  | • Faculty will submit a proposal to run a LLC  
                   • Description of topic  
                   • Goals of the program  
                   • Tentative schedule (“Syllabus”)  
                   • Proposed “coffee hour” plans  
                   • Desired number of students in program  
                   • Approval from Chair and Dean | • Request for proposals will go out October 1, and due November 1.  
                   • The proposals will be reviewed by a committee of Academics, Housing, and Student Affairs (Review Board)  
                   • Faculty with accepted proposals will get one month summer salary.  
                   • Number of students will depend also on how programs are funded and where they will be housed. |
| Student Application | • Students will apply to participate in a particular LLC  
                       • An essay on why they want to be involved in this LLC  
                       • What they hope will happen in this LLC  
                       • Their goals in being involved | • Students will apply when they sign up for housing (early/mid spring)  
                       • A consistent template will be developed by the Review Board  
                       • Faculty will have input  
                       • Acceptance will be made by the faculty in conjunction with the Review Board  
                       • LLC will have to “make” – enough students to be financially covered and to fit in appropriate housing. |
# Board Structures for Continuing Administration:

| **Student Board for each LLC** | - When students apply to participate in a LLC, they can also specify if they are interested on being on the Board  
- Further application may be required | - To meet weekly  
- Responsible for student input  
- Arranging other programming (both informal and formal)  
- Web site, internal communication, etc. |
|---|---|---|
| **Student Advisory Board for GT LLC** | - Made up of all the LLC Student Chairs | - To meet at least once a month  
- Compare notes on issues in the LLC |
| **Advisory Board for GT LLCs** | - Made up of all LLC Faculty/Directors and Review Board (See faculty proposals) or Living Learning Coordinator (currently does not exist) | - To meet at least once a month  
- Discuss lessons learned  
- Best Practices |
| **Assessment** | - Designed for GT LLC as a whole  
- Each individual LLC can add to it | - Distributed and collected each term by the Review Board or Living Learning Coordinator (currently does not exist)  
- Also, midterm “discussion” assessment |
### Assessment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GT Strategic Plan Statements</th>
<th>LLC Goal</th>
<th>Source</th>
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<tr>
<td>Georgia Tech will nurture a community of scholars that seeks out the rich opportunities for <strong>lifelong learning both inside and outside of the classroom</strong>.</td>
<td>Encourage a more engaging and inquiring approach to student learning.</td>
<td>Faculty rubric on students</td>
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<td>Student survey (do one on first day of program, end of 1st semester, and end of year)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Georgia Tech’s rigorous curriculum and co-curricular activities will continue to challenge our students to <strong>grow as intellectual and social beings</strong>, preparing them for success on their chosen path.</td>
<td>Enticing students to be more reflective in their learning</td>
<td>Student journals/final summaries (do one on first day of program, end of 1st semester, and end of year)</td>
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<td>[Students] will be expected to participate in building a <strong>learning environment that fosters an extensive exchange of ideas</strong> through classroom discussion, interaction with faculty and fellow students, and respect for the Academic Honor Code. Faculty and students will learn from each other.</td>
<td>Facilitating faculty student interaction</td>
<td>Faculty Surveys</td>
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<td>Student Surveys (do one on first day of program, end of 1st semester, and end of year)</td>
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<td>Provide opportunities for <strong>diverse learning experiences</strong> both in and out of the classroom including art, drama, recreation, extracurricular activities, and athletics.</td>
<td>Stronger connection with community at Tech</td>
<td>Student survey (do one on first day of program, end of 1st semester, and end of year)</td>
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## Funding Sources

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| Student Fee on top of housing expenses       | It is possible with a $150/semester charge to students this could be a nearly self-sustaining program. | 1) Psychologically it creates the sense of "value added" in being part of one of these communities.  
2) Psychologically it increases the commitment to involvement in the community  
3) Student reaction (so far - we will do focus groups in fall) is that if they want to do it, this amount of money will have no impact on their decision to do so.  
4) Parent reaction (so far...) is they love the idea of their child being involved in one of these programs, and they wouldn't even hesitate over the cost.  
6) Higher price than housing has charged before, and they are currently not comfortable with this price tag. |
| Provost Office                               | A financial commitment from Academic Affairs to help support programmatic and possible overall administrative support | The involvement of Academic Affairs is essential. This connection and buy in ties the program with both Housing and Academic Affairs |
| Colleges/Schools                             | Subsidizing a program that supports goals of the college/schools        | An example might be some interdisciplinary programs on robotics or sustainability.                                                          |
| Foundation                                   | This could be a program that is attractive for development.              | Foundation funds give nice flexibility for programs that require off campus activities. As well as, subsidize student fees.               |
Appendix A

Sophomore Year Experience Task Force

August 31 – November 1, 2007
January 30, 2008

Task Force Members

Chair-Dr. Dana Hartley (UG Studies, EAS)
Dan Morrison (Housing)
Alex Becking (Housing)
Dr. Pradeep Agrawal (CHBE)
Dr. Richard Barke (PUBP)
John Stein (Dean of Students)
Dr. Steven Girardot (Success Programs)
Executive Summary of Recommendations:

1) Critical Programming
   
   A. Continuous Student Input:
      - Housing Hall Council interaction
      - New Transfer Student Advisory Board
   
   B. General Programming:
      - Giving continuity to programming for sophomores and transfer students in residential areas as well as non-residential
      - New position requested (see below)
      - Task Force to set up template for continuity (Chair – Konteint Redmon)
   
   C. Faculty-Student Interaction:
      - Faculty current event "seminars" Faculty-Student dinners
      - Living-Learning Communities (multiple options, space for up to 1000 students)
      - New position requested (see below)
      - Task Force to set up Living-Learning Program (Chairs – Dan Morrison, Dana Hartley)

2) New Positions (closely linked with Housing, Student Affairs and Academics):
   
   A. Director of Faculty/Student Interaction
      - See Faculty-Student Interaction descriptions above – this would be the job of this position to coordinate.
      - This requires strong communication skills for working with faculty, housing and student affairs to coordinate events and living-learning plans.
   
   B. Coordinator of Sophomore and Transfer Programming
      - Coordinate specific programs for sophomore and transfer students with Housing for students living on and off campus.
      - Work with student organizations (Hall Councils, Transfer Student Advisory Board) to get continuous feedback and ideas.
I. Introduction:

The charge of the Sophomore Year Experience Task Force as outlined below, came from a joint interest from Auxiliary Services and Academic Affairs to study the need for new programs for Sophomores. The task force started August 30, 2007 and it was requested to have its recommendations finalized by November 1, 2007 to meet the timing of the architectural planning for renovations to the North Avenue Apartments.

1) Addressing Sophomore Year Issues

- Impetus was the new acquisition of the North Avenue Apartments (NAA). There are over 2000 new beds, which gives the possibility for housing nearly all sophomores in one area.
- Are there programming needs?
- New initiatives?
- New positions needed?

2) North Avenue Apartments Space Issues

- What gave the task force some urgency (note total time frame was two months) was the timing of renovations and design for the NAA.
- Needed to define the new initiatives and any related space needs

There are several known sophomore issues from literature:

- Burn out from Freshmen Year
  - Students often have a large adjustment in their freshman year in work load from high school, and suddenly they are back and facing it again.
- Still in many core courses
So they are not yet deeply connected with their major. They may just be taking their first major course this year.

- Added pressure on major selection
  - The students become very aware that their major choice will impact internships and courses, and some experiences make them question.

- Less opportunities for new relationships
  - Freshmen come in a cohort so more open to meeting new people

- Less opportunities for leadership
  - There are Freshmen Councils, but then most leadership positions fall to Juniors and Seniors.

In our discussions as a Task Force we realized that many of these issues are also faced by Transfer Students. So, in our study we wanted to consider them in the programs.

II Methods/Approach

In order to address the charge, the Task Force met weekly. We approached the issue in the following steps:

1. Understanding lessons learned from FYE
   a. Housing presented key points:
      i. Students want faculty interaction, but don't know what that would be.
      ii. Students do NOT want faculty living in the dorms...

2. Looking at successful SYE elsewhere (Emory, Audio Conference)
   a. We visited Emory:
      i. Since their residential program is for 200, there are some components that we not transferable to a goal of 2000.
ii. However, their space had a late night café, and it was clear this had very positive impacts on the student activity to draw them out into shared space.

3. Student Focus Groups
   a. Since Richard Barke does focus groups as part of his research, he was able to direct us on scripts that allowed the students to take us along – rather than us forcing a direction in our questions.
   b. We had Kathi Wallace from ICPA facilitate the Focus Groups, and one member from our Task Force sat in on each one.
   c. We chose to do three focus groups with the specific criteria below, and in this order:
      i. Juniors who lived in the housing Freshmen Year Experience (FYE) and Sophomore year.
      ii. Sophomores who lived in housing FYE and currently in housing
      iii. Recent transfer students (within last year). No housing specification.

III) Results and Discussion

What we learned from each was key to our recommendations. In particular, the focus groups took us in directions that completely changed our vision. Below, we outline the main common themes from each. And as mentioned the full reports are in the Appendices.

i) New Information from Current Juniors

- Involvement and balance are important to connection to Tech
- Noticed drop in Support from freshmen year
- Those in Living-learning loved it! (International House)
- Those with opportunities for faculty interaction – loved it!
- Information hard to find*
- GT Run-around (related to finding information)
ii) New Information from Current Sophomores

- Pressure and confusion over major/career, etc.
- Drop in support from freshmen year
- Want (non-academic) Faculty interaction
- Hard to find information*
- GT Run-around

iii) New Information from Transfer Students

- Hard to find information*
- Would love to have a voice (Transfer student board or organization)
- Want faculty interaction.
- Space with food – needed for study

Key take aways

- Involvement key to connection and success
- Food always a draw
- High interest in “non-course like” interaction with faculty
- Hard to find information*
  - A more general issue than Sophomore student programming
  - Students are working with Administration to integrate Buzzport for easier access to all components.
  - Also time to consider a Customer Relations Management Software such as Telisa – which is the Wizard for MS Office.
  - This is something that needs to be considered in our programming
IV) Conclusions/Recommendations

1) Crucial New Programming

A. Continuous Student Input:
   a. Hall Council interaction
      i. Role and input in programming
      ii. Faculty advisor added to Hall Councils
   b. New Transfer Student SAB
      i. Same comments as above
      ii. New additions to Board every term – since transfer students come in each term

B. General Programming: (Examples)
   a. Major selection panels
   b. Transition support (burnout, adjustment)

C. Faculty-Student Interaction:
   a. Faculty/NYT current event “seminars”
      i. Focused on current events
      ii. NYT will send editor AND pay for pizza
   b. Faculty-Student dinners
      i. Groups of 10
      ii. RSVP required
   c. Living-Learning Communities
      i. Success of I-House and Honors overwhelming
      ii. Health, Research, Service, Environment, Robotics, etc.
      iii. 10 with ~100 students/each
      iv. Task Force to start soon
2) New Positions:

A. Director of Faculty/Student Interaction
   a. See Faculty-Student Interaction descriptions above – this would be the job of this position to coordinate.
   b. This requires strong communication skills for working with faculty, housing and student affairs to coordinate events and living-learning plans.
   c. Requires a strong understanding of pedagogy and college student life.
   d. Academic Professional
   e. Close ties with Housing, Academics and Student Affairs

B. Coordinator of Sophomore and Transfer Programming
   a. Coordinate specific programs for sophomore and transfer students with Housing for students living on and off campus.
   b. Develop, execute, and assess new programs based on research literature and best practices.
   c. Work with student organizations (Hall Councils, Transfer Student Advisory Board) to get continuous feedback and ideas.
   d. A position strongly linking Housing with Student Affairs and Academics

V. Next Steps

1) Two Task Forces being established
   a. Living Learning Communities
      i. Chaired by Dan Morrison and Dana Hartley
   b. Continuity of Sophomore and Transfer Programming both residential and non
      i. Chaired by Konteint Redmon, Assistant Director of Housing for NAA
2) Budget Request for new positions
   a. Director of Faculty/Student Interaction
   b. Coordinator of Sophomore and Transfer Programming
3) Test runs of dinners and event discussions with faculty in housing (Konteint Redmon is working on in NAA)