

RUNNING HEAD: GLOBAL VILLAGE

Global Village:
A Proposal for a Multicultural Living-learning Community
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Abstract

The following is a proposal for Global Village, a multicultural living-learning community. The literature review delves into research on living-learning environments, the need for intercultural competency development, and the state of international students in the United States. The program design states the proposed mission and learning outcomes, discusses pertinent theory, and gives an overview of the implementation of the living-learning community.

Research

Living-Learning Environments

In large part to the rising costs of higher education, institutions of higher education are having to account for the quality of the education they provide to students, parents, and financial investors. In response to the criticisms “institutions are intentionally creating programs to integrate the curricular and co-curricular experiences of their students” in hopes of creating a “seamless learning environment” (Inkelas, et al., 2006 *a*, p. 116). Living-learning environments are one of type of program, intentionally created to assist in the creating of a seamless learning environment (Inkelas, et al. *a*). Living-learning communities are designed explicitly to structure “students’ in-and-out-of-class experiences to foster a holistic learning experience as students live and learn in the community” (Pasque & Murphy, 2005, p. 431).

Longerbeam and Sedlacek (2006) define living-learning communities as “residence environments that provide a coordinated academic experience as a part of the living environment” (p. 42). A broader and more encompassing definition is provided by Inkelas and Weisman (2003). They state that living-learning environments were instituted

to “link together learning opportunities-whether they be courses, co-curricular activities, special topics, or interactions and conversations with faculty and peers” in order that students may “integrate and obtain a deeper understanding of their knowledge” (Inkelas & Weisman, p. 335).

Across institutions of higher education living-learning environments share some basic characteristics. Living-learning environments tend to be created “to create a smaller community within an institution” in order to “foster students’ learning and development, as well as help them to become involved and integrated” (Inkelas, et al., 2006 *a*, p. 117) in the larger institution. These environments also foster “greater faculty and peer interaction, increased opportunities for coordinated learning activities, and an academically and socially supportive living environment” (Inkelas & Weisman, 2003, p. 335).

As the occurrence of living-learning environments has increased, research has begun to question whether or not these communities are producing the outcomes that they were designed to reach. Current research indicates that living-learning are providing benefits to students both intellectually and interpersonally.

Pasque and Murphy’s (2005) study found that living-learning environments “are predictors of students’ academic achievement and intellectual engagement” (p. 441). Inkelas, Voigt, Longerbeam, Owen and Johnson’s (2006 *b*) study indicated several academic benefits of living-learning communities. Their findings suggest that participating in living-learning environments is linked to “higher scores on a range of intellectual outcomes, including critical thinking/analysis abilities, application of knowledge abilities, and enjoyment of challenging intellectual pursuits” (p. 38). Inkelas,

et al. (2006 *b*) also reports that students who partake in living-learning programs report a “statistically higher level of academic self-confidence,” and were more likely “to feel competent in their critical thinking skills” (p. 64).

In addition to their academic gains, students who lived in living-learning environments also showed gains in regards to their interpersonal development. According to Inkelas, et al.’s (2006 *b*) study, living-learning participants were more likely to be involved in “mentoring relationships with a faculty member” (p. 63). Stassen’s (2003) research showed that living-learning communities “provide increased opportunities for students to integrate their social and academic worlds around” their peer groups (p. 608). Students involved in living-learning programs were also “more likely to discuss both academic/career and sociocultural issues with their peer” (Inkelas, et al., *b*, p. 63) than students who lived in other types of environments. This study also indicates that students involved in living-learning programs were more likely to have “openness to new ideas and an appreciation of arts, music, and different cultures” (Inkelas, et al., *b*, p. 63).

Intercultural Competence

As Baxter Magolda (2003) discusses, institutions of higher education are primarily concerned with preparing students intellectually for careers, but there are also other learning outcomes they hope to instill in their students. One of those learning outcomes is an “appreciation of diversity or intercultural competence” (Baxter Magolda, p. 234). Blimling (2002) reports that many years of research indicates that involvement “in diverse college environments is statistically associated with gains in measure of critical thinking, interpersonal skill, and changes in students’ opinions, beliefs, and

attitudes” (p. 518). Indicating that being involved in cultural diverse programs will assist students in meeting the learning goals institutions have for intercultural competence.

As Duncan, Boisjoly, Levy, Kremer and Eccles (2003) discuss “it is difficult to change the way in which individuals think,” but “when educational institutions provide and support sufficiently novel environments that demand” individuals think differently, “complex thinking” can occur (p. 3). Students themselves suggest that one way to provide these novel environments “is to embed diversity, in a planned, purposeful way into...living arrangements” (Light, 2001, p. 43). Inkelas and Weismann (2003) note “that openness to and tolerance for diversity is associated most strongly with peer interactions and not academic activities” indicating that campuses should provide opportunities for students to “interact with and discuss social issues with their peers” as well as integrate intercultural competence into the curriculum (p. 358-359). Whether in living-learning environments or in the curriculum, students should be exposed to “multiple and sometimes competing perspectives that challenge previously unexamined assumptions” (Zhao, Kuh, & Carini, 2005, p. 209).

Longerbeam and Sedlacek (2006) note in their article that living-learning environments “are effective environments in which students may develop a more positive attitude toward difference” and are a place where students “are more likely to learn new perspectives and become more open to difference” (p. 42). They referenced Pike’s (2002) research which found that living on campus was linked to increased levels of “openness to diversity” (p. 283) and theorized that students in living-learning programs that provide “a diverse peer group may be more likely to have greater numbers of interactions with

diverse peers” and therefore may “become more appreciative of difference” than students who do not live in that type of environment (Longerbeam & Sedlacek, p. 42-43).

International Students

Despite the events of September 11, 2001, which it was feared would have a negative impact on the ability of international students to enroll in American institutions of higher education, enrollment for international students “continues to increase at a steady pace” (Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007, p. 28). International students make up about 5% of the student population in the United States (Zhao, et al. 2005). Previous research indicates that international students “face many challenges adjusting to their new environment and that this may have an impact on students’ academic success and psychological well-being” as well as the ability of institutions of higher education to retain these students (Poyrazli & Grahame, p. 28).

Some of the challenges international students face are locating a place to live, understanding how to navigate the American educational system, and/or “making new friends and developing a new social support system” (Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007, p. 29). Research suggests that “building relationships with people from the host culture,” “engagement in extracurricular activities,” and living in “a pleasant social atmosphere” help to counter the effects of the challenges international students encounter (Poyrazli & Grahame, p. 31). Poyrazli & Grahame suggest providing opportunities for American and international students to interact, in hopes that international students can successfully face their challenges and American students can “expand their knowledge of diversity” and “develop more acceptance and tolerance towards individuals from different racial/ethnic backgrounds” (p. 41).

Program Design

Mission Statement

Global Village seeks to provide a safe and enriching intercultural community that provides opportunities for international, national, and third-culture students to live with and learn from one another in order that they may become informed and responsible citizens of the world.

Learning Outcomes

Students who reside in Global Village will:

1. develop intrapersonal skills by achieving an understanding of their own personal identity in the context of diversity.
2. develop cognitive skills by learning about, experiencing and appreciating diversity and how that plays into them becoming global citizens.
3. develop interpersonal skills by being able to communicate and establish relationships with diverse others.
4. develop civic responsibility by responding as a responsible global citizen.

Theory

Social Constructivist Theory

A Constructivist would agree that knowledge can simply be passed from one individual to another, but would argue that knowledge can also be gained from “an individual’s knowledge construction process wherein knowledge is actively learned and subjectively known” (Stage & Muller, 1999, p. 32-33). This theory also stresses that learning should occur “within the context of reality” and that “physical experiences that encourage learners to attempt to understand and interpret phenomena for themselves” (Stage & Muller, p. 33) should be provided. “Social constructivism, a modification of constructivist theory” focuses on the idea that the learner makes discoveries and a teacher assists the learner in placing what they have discovered “within a framework” (Stage &

Muller, p. 33). The student learns when they “engage socially in dialogue and activities around shared problems or tasks” and the teacher’s role is to serve “as mediator and guide in the knowledge-construction process” (Stage & Muller, p. 33).

Social constructivism is a learning theory that is relevant to Residence Life programming, as well as various other areas of student affairs practice. Students residing on campus are continuously living their lives within the context of their peers and resident advisors and/or the “reality” of the campus environment. They are bombarded with “physical experiences”-conversations, homework assignments, programs, conflict, etc.-that require them “to attempt to understand and interpret [the] phenomena for themselves” (Stage & Muller, 1999, p. 33). Resident Directors and Resident Advisors often serve as the “teachers” within on-campus communities (peers can also serve as “teachers” in many cases). They “engage students in dialogue and activities around ‘real life’ problems and tasks such as crisis management, interpersonal skill, leadership skills, conflict resolution, team work, and counseling” (Stage & Muller, p.33).

Within Global Village social constructivism learning theory would be used consistently and will allow international, national and third-culture students to engage in the reality of a global community. Students living in Global Village will be encouraged to partake in their reality of international community and will be mentored and lead by Resident Directors and Resident Assistants through the learning process.

Astin’s Theory of Involvement

Environmental factor theories examines how “conditions that are found (or not found) in the college environment can have a major impact on students’ growth and development” (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998, p. 25). Astin’s Theory of

Involvement is an environmental theory that stresses “the roles of student involvement in development” (Evans, et al., p. 26). Astin’s theory models how “input” (the impact of the student’s pre-college environment) interacts with the “environment” (the campus, programs, people, etc.) to produce “outputs” (“characteristics, knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviors”) that can be seen after college (Luna De La Rosa, 2007). The input students bring with them to the college environment impacts the campus environment, the campus environment impacts the student, and both input and environment interact to create output. Astin believed that if students were to learn and grow they needed “to actively engage in their environment” (Evans, et al., p. 27). In this environmental model it is the responsibility of student affairs professionals and educators “to create opportunities for involvement to occur” (Evans, et. al., p. 27).

Astin’s Theory of Involvement is a key element of Residence Life programming. Students living on campus bring with them their previous experiences, including such influences as home life, educational background, religious upbringing, and/or previous involvement in co-curricular activities which serve as their input into the environment of the on-campus community. The on-campus community’s programming, staff and location feed into the student’s experience and are also impacted by the student’s input. The output is what Residence Life hopes to impact in a positive way.

Within Global Village Astin’s Theory of Involvement will be put into practice to partner with students in providing experiences that are aimed at producing positive output. Student’s “input” will be taken into consideration through discussions with roommates, Resident Advisors and other Global Village residents. The Resident Director and Resident Advisors (as well as the many other factors that are part of environment)

will provide an environment where growth and learning can take place. And the hope is that students who have lived in Global Village will have “outputs” that reflect responsible and informed global citizens.

Location

Global Village’s location is important to the successful implementation of the mission and learning goals of the living-learning environment. There are several aspects of the location that must be present:

1. The housing must be within walking distance of campus. International students most likely will not have personal transportation, so proximity to the campus is critical to how desirable it is to live in Global Village.
2. The housing must be designed in such a way as to promote community (i.e. doors open into a courtyard, common space, housing clustered together, etc.). One of the key aspects of Global Village is that it is an international community, so the physical location needs to allow for community to occur.
3. The housing must be apartment style (have kitchens, dining/living rooms). Food is an integral aspect of culture and ethnicity and students need to have the ability to interact and share with their peers in this manner.

Availability

Global Village will be open to international students year-round. International students may or may not return to their home country during summer and winter break, due to costs of plane tickets and/or limitations on their student visas. It is necessary to provide housing for them during breaks so that they do not have to find temporary housing every 4-6 months.

Residents

Students who live in Global Village will represent the various races, ethnicities and cultures that are present at the university. There will be a 1:1 ratio (1 national student to 1 international/third-culture student) within each room. So in a two bedroom apartment

there would be 2 national students and 2 international/third-culture students. The national students would not be allowed to share a room.

Requirements

Application

Students who desire to live in Global Village must complete an application to live within the international community. The application will require students to disclose their standing as a national, international or third-culture student to assist in the ratio of national students to international/third-culture students. Other questions will be aimed at discovering the student's previous experiences (i.e. seeing if national students have traveled and/or studied abroad), the student's declared major (i.e. majors that focus on multiculturalism, diversity, minority studies, etc. would be beneficial) and why they desire to live in an international community. The application for international students would most likely not require them to disclose their declared major, because they obviously are committed (in some sense) to an international experience due to the fact that they are not studying in their home country.

Enrollment in Approved Courses

Students who live in Global Village will be required to be enrolled in one 3 unit course that is approved by the Advisory Committee. (See below under Curriculum).

Recommendations

Previous Experiences

It is recommended that national students living in Global Village will have had some form of international experience. Examples of international experiences are traveling, mission trips and/or study abroad. By having previous international experience,

national students will have previous knowledge of other cultures and will have a basic respect for other cultures.

Interests and/or Academic Major

It is recommended that national students living in Global Village will have some for of interest in developing themselves as a global citizen and/or will be pursuing a degree that is invested in diversity, international studies, minorities, and/or other related topics.

Resident Advisors

The Resident Advisors for Global Village will fill out the same application as all other applicants who are applying for a Resident Advisor position on campus. The applicant will provide an opportunity for applicants to denote if they are interested in being a Resident Advisor in Global Village. Students who desire to hold this position in Global Village will be interviewed as all other applicants, but 2-3 members of the Advisory Committee will also be present at the interview. It is necessary that the Resident Advisors in Global Village are committed to living in and promoting the ideals of the proposed international community.

Recommendations

Previously Resided in Global Village

Obviously the first year the program is in existence this would not be possible, but as the living-learning community continues it would be beneficial to the community to have student leaders who have a working knowledge of the vision of Global Village and have a desire to remain involved in the community.

Previous Experiences

Similar to reasoning for Residents

Interests and/or Academic Major

Similar to reasoning for Residents

Resident Director

The Resident Director who oversees Global Village will most likely also be overseeing Resident Advisors and students who are not living in the community, due to the smaller size of the community. The hope is that the Resident Director will be a proponent of the mission and learning outcomes of Global Village. Because of the nature of this community the Resident Director will meet with an Advisory Committee once a month for advice and accountability.

Advisory Committee

The Advisory Committee will meet with the Resident Director once a month for discussion and advice about best practices, theory and current research in regards to international living-learning communities. The committee will be composed of 5 to 8 members who represent faculty and student affairs professionals that are part of Academic Departments or Student Life Offices that are associated with diversity, multiculturalism, minorities, international students, etc.

International Student Services

If space allows, it would optimal to have office space for International Student Services within Global Village. Though it may not be practical to move the entire office to the community, it would be beneficial to the international students to have access to a staff and/or graduate assistant from International Student Services available for 10-20 hours a week.

Curriculum

All students living in Global Village (Resident Advisors will be exempt if they have previously enrolled and earned a passing grade) will be enrolled in one 3 unit course per semester that has been previously approved by the Advisory Committee. There will be a minimum of 4 approved classes that will be available each semester. Students who are enrolled in the same course will be able to study and discuss class material together.

The hope is that in the future courses can be designed specifically for students who live in Global Village that will incorporate an academic portion and an interpersonal portion (group discussions, interviews, and/or activities) so that everyone within the community will be taking one class together. The academic portion would take place in a classroom setting and the interpersonal portion would be conducted in Global Village and would be lead by faculty.

Faculty Involvement

Initially faculty involvement will most likely be limited to interactions in the classroom. The hope is that, as the curriculum for the Global Village community is developed faculty will have more of a presence within the living-learning environment. As the program gains momentum, the plan is to have a faculty member (and their family) take up residence within Global Village to further promote the learning aspect of the community.

Programs (Overarching)

Community Required Event

There will be an event that all members of Global Village will be required to attend, once a month. The event will be planned by the Resident Director and the

Resident Advisors. The event must be in alignment with the mission and learning outcomes of the community.

Resident Advisor Required Event

There will be an event once a month, put on by each Resident Advisor for their students and all students will be required to attend. The event must be in alignment with the mission and learning outcomes of the community.

Dinner and Discussion (Idea for a program)

A student(s) will cook a cultural or ethnically “traditional” meal for their whole floor or wing (paid for by residence life). During and/or after the meal the Resident Advisor can lead a small group discussion about a pertinent issue.

Service Component

Global Village, as a community, will choose an organization or non-profit to support throughout the school year. It must be an organization that works on an international level and/or works for international issues. The community will provide volunteer hours to the organization and will be an advocate for the organization on campus.

Assessment

Students

CSEQ

The CSEQ would be given to all students living within Global Village at the beginning of the fall semester and at the end of the spring semester. A pre/post test could be conducted on the data related to interpersonal development (interactions with faculty, staff, peers, and diverse peers), overall satisfaction with the university, and diversity

issues to see if there is a significant difference in student development in regards to the learning outcomes. The data from Global Village could also be compared to CSEQ data from other types of living environments and non-residents.

Focus Groups

Focus groups would be conducted once a quarter to collect qualitative data on students' experiences, feelings, and thoughts about being part of the Global Village living-learning environment.

Retention and Academics

Data will be collected from the Records Office on retention rates and GPA of students who take part in Global Village. The data will be compared to retention rates and GPA of students living in other types of living environments and non-residents.

Faculty

A survey will be created for faculty to determine if student/faculty perceptions match, in regards to satisfaction with the program. It will also be a way for faculty to give input about their perceptions of how well the program is going.

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