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*In a number of new initiatives, the problems of a fragmented curriculum and student isolation in existing large classes are addressed through peer-facilitated learning opportunities, or more ambitiously, by restructuring the curriculum to create linked classes.*

## Restructuring Large Classes to Create Communities of Learners

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A widening stream of research is identifying the power of the student peer group in enhancing student persistence, achievement, and satisfaction in undergraduate settings (Johnson and Johnson, 1989; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991; Astin, 1993; Light, 1992; Springer, Stanne, and Donovan, 1999; Tinto, 1997). Students are increasingly telling us that engaging with other students on meaningful academic tasks makes a critical difference in their involvement in college. Yet the question remains: How can we best set up conditions for students to participate in meaningful collaborative learning activities when the very structures of undergraduate courses—not to mention the complexity of students' lives—do not foster sustained focus or opportunities to cultivate human relationships? As the authors in this volume argue, many lower-division classes are large. A significant number are huge. Furthermore, students experience classroom learning in fragments, with different groups of students in different sets of courses usually meeting for brief periods of time and having little or no relationship with each other. This multiple-course delivery structure might have been effective when it was created in the early part of the twentieth century. In those days, most students lived in residence halls and were not distracted by commuting, jobs, family responsibilities, or the constant lure of radio, television, stereos, and the Internet.

Today's prevailing course structures are problematic for faculty members too. Large class sizes and the customary sixty- or seventy-five-minute blocks of time put enormous constraints on their ability to know students, to involve them in constructing their own understanding of the course's concepts, or to ask them to demonstrate that understanding in all but the most

routinized ways. Most teachers with whom we speak know this format is not effective for most students' engagement or learning, yet the political economies of our universities seem to have locked these structures in place.

In recent years, though, a number of new initiatives have emerged that live within and alongside large classes. The intentions behind them are to foster greater focus and community among students and deeper engagement with learning. Some of these programs are built around discrete courses and make effective use of student peer facilitators and community building to strengthen learning and student-completion rates. Others are curricular learning communities in the sense of "purposefully linking courses or coursework so that students find greater coherence in what they are learning as well as increased interaction with faculty and fellow students" (Gabelnick, MacGregor, Matthews, and Smith, 1990, p. 5).

Although these programs vary considerably in their structural design and strategies for small-group learning, they share intentions and elements. They create small, knowable communities of students with an academic purpose. They develop active, collaborative learning environments where understanding of course content is shared and constructed. They intentionally increase time on task through formal and informal activities related to the coursework. The collaborative activities themselves increase feedback loops among students as they test their understanding and share information, questions, and study strategies. In the multiple-course learning community models, intellectual connections are drawn between two or more classes. That these initiatives include such elements should come as no surprise to most readers of this series: they have been repeatedly promoted as keys to good practice in undergraduate education (NIE Study Group, 1984; Chickering and Gamson, 1987, 1991). This chapter will describe some of the initiatives and mention some of the challenges involved in establishing them.

### **Peer-Facilitated Communities**

In large universities, many initiatives are working to strengthen the existing pattern of large-class offerings by creating additional meeting points or even credit-bearing courses every week to increase community, engagement, and ultimately, student success. Undergraduate peer advisers or facilitators are often the lynchpins in these initiatives. As undergraduates at the same institution, these "near peers" bring experiences and perspectives not usually shared by graduate teaching assistants, who generally experienced their undergraduate education elsewhere. In addition, for the undergraduates involved, these programs provide rare leadership opportunities, teaching responsibilities, and often a unique preprofessional development experience as well.

**Supplemental Instruction Programs.** Perhaps the mostly widely known and consistently evaluated approach to peer-facilitated learning is the long-standing Supplemental Instruction Program invented at University

of Missouri-Kansas City in the early 1970s. This initiative took the fresh approach of targeting not high-risk students but rather high-risk classes—those distinguished by high rates of withdrawal and failure. These classes are generally characterized by “large amounts of weekly reading from both difficult textbooks and secondary library reference works, infrequent examinations that focus on higher cognitive levels of Bloom’s taxonomy, voluntary and unrecorded class attendance, and large classes in which each student has little opportunity for interaction with the professor or the other students” (Martin and Arendale, 1994, pp. 11–12). Any student in the class can voluntarily participate in one or more of the three Supplemental Instruction (SI) sessions offered each week, which are convened by an SI leader—a specially trained, more advanced undergraduate student who has successfully completed the targeted class. The SI sessions stress not only the course content but also study strategies and learning and thinking strategies; SI leaders are trained to facilitate small-group discussion, rather than repeat the lectures. An important feature of this model is the collaboration between the class professor and the SI leader, who sits in on the course and often gives the professor feedback on the students’ progress as well as their difficulties in understanding course material. Another important feature is that SI does not present itself to students as a remedial program but rather as an optional supplement open to all students in the class at any time. Building on the voluminous studies demonstrating the efficacy of this program, UMKC has disseminated the SI approach to literally hundreds of campuses in the United States and abroad. In any given year now, over 350 campuses are running SI programs, reaching about 250,000 students. SI pioneers Deanna Martin and David Arendale present a thorough description of this approach in the New Directions for Teaching and Learning Series volume they edited, *Supplemental Instruction: Increasing Achievement and Retention* (Martin and Arendale, 1994).

**Emerging Scholars Programs.** This approach parallels Supplemental Instruction in creating an academic community of students facilitated by a more advanced undergraduate peer facilitator. This strategy emerged at University of California, Berkeley, in the 1980s in mathematics, through Uri Treisman’s groundbreaking and highly successful effort to increase African American students’ achievement rates in the calculus sequence (Treisman, 1985, 1992; Fullilove and Treisman, 1990). The problem, Treisman found, was not deficiencies in academic skills or motivation but rather in patterns of academic isolation. His strategy: highly collaborative math skills workshops that would increase students’ time on task with calculus through highly involving problems and increase student community at the same time. These skills workshops, variously called Emerging Scholars Programs (ESP), academic excellence workshops, math excel programs, or by other locally appropriate names, have now spread to well over a hundred campuses across the country and are being developed in a variety of introductory science and engineering courses in addition to those in the introductory college mathematics sequence.

Emerging Scholars Programs differ from the Supplemental Instruction approach in several ways. These programs are associated with math, engineering, and increasingly, other introductory-level science courses. Historically they targeted underrepresented minorities and women, although now at many universities the recruited participants are a purposefully heterogeneous mix of students of color and white students, and the program is marketed as an academic excellence program. At research universities, the program carries elective departmental credit and is taught by a graduate TA. At regional colleges and universities, participation is generally voluntary, but a semester-long commitment and consistent attendance is expected: students are asked to join in a formal workshop group of about seven to twelve students associated with their course for the entire term. More advanced undergraduates serve as the facilitators of these programs. Perhaps most important, the workshop pedagogy is carefully constructed around small-group problem solving and facilitated by a peer undergraduate, often a student of color who is majoring in the discipline of the course.

Several impressive evaluation studies of these programs at the University of Wisconsin (Alexander, Burda, and Millar, 1997; Kosciuk, 1997), Cal Poly-Pomona (Bonsangue and Drew, 1995; Bonsangue, 1994) and the University of Texas-Austin (Moreno, Muller, Asera, Wyatt, and Epperson, 1999) consistently demonstrate the power of this approach, with Emerging Scholars students outperforming and “outpersisting” nonparticipants.

**Freshman Interest Groups.** A different strategy for building community in large university settings is Freshman Interest Groups (FIGs). Jack Bennett, director of advising at the University of Oregon, invented this learning community model in 1983; since then, numbers of other large campuses have adapted FIGs, including the University of Washington, the University of Missouri-Columbia, Illinois State University, and the University of Indiana. In these programs, groups of fifteen to twenty students enroll in two, or more frequently, three courses related to a common interest or preparatory for a major. The following list provides a sample of the ninety different FIGs at the University of Washington:

Ancient culture	Community and place
Classical art and literature	Comparative history of ideas
Modern America	International relations
Human behavior	The cosmos
Culture and gender	Life science
Performing arts: dance	Physical science
Performing arts: drama	Engineering
Education	Geology

Usually one course in the mix is a small-enrollment course, such as English composition or speech communication, whereas the others are

large-enrollment settings. In addition, the student groups meet at least once a week in a freshman proseminar convened by a more advanced undergraduate peer adviser. At some institutions, the peer adviser is joined by a faculty member or a student affairs professional as a cofacilitator, but generally the proseminar is the undergraduate student leader's responsibility. Some campuses have deepened the cocurricular dimension of FIGs by situating the programs and the students in residence halls, so students in a common FIG live on the same or contiguous floors along with their peer adviser. Another successful variation, at the University of Washington, is Transfer Interest Groups (TRIGs), geared to transfer students enrolling in large three-hundred-level classes that are the gateways to study in the major.

The faculty members who teach courses embedded in FIGs are not expected to teach their courses differently, although some professors report that they look for ways to illuminate the theme or emphasis of the FIG. Connections and community develop in the proseminar component of the model. FIG proseminar activities vary a great deal even within a university program, ranging from building informal and formal study groups, working on time management and study strategies, getting oriented to and enrolled in the university's electronic mail system, receiving academic advisement for subsequent terms, learning about the career paths of university alumni who majored in the interest group's discipline or professional concentration, engaging in community service projects, attending campus events together or going on a FIG-related field trip. These are just a few of the many directions a FIG can take. Through these activities, FIG programs provide students in their first term in college with an immediate and consistent community of fellow students with similar academic interests, an opportunity to meet and converse informally with the faculty members of the cluster of classes, an orientation to the university and its services, and a constellation of coherent classes. Although many faculty members of the largest classes do not know which of their students are enrolled in a Freshman Interest Group, those who do at the University of Washington have reported that their FIG students seem the most academically engaged and seem to participate in more lively discussions (Lowell, 1997).

FIGs have been so successful in helping students make the transition to college (Tokuno and Campbell, 1992; Tinto and Goodsell, 1993) that programs on some campuses now reach very large numbers of students: 45 percent of the freshman class at University of Washington now enroll in ninety FIGs, and plans are afoot to scale up the program to 60 percent of the class by fall 2000. Similarly, University of Missouri's FIG program (based in residence halls), which served about 25 percent of its freshman class in 1999, has also generated positive response from students and significantly increased student retention (Pike, Schroeder, and Berry, 1996; Schroeder and Hurst, 1996). At this same institution, a residential "House Environment Survey" comparing students enrolled in FIG programs with those not enrolled in fall 1997 revealed that FIG students were generally more

engaged in both the academic and residential communities than their non-FIG student peers. The most dramatic difference was that FIG students reported that they regularly got together in the dorms for study sessions (Johnson, 1998).

**Linked Freshman Seminars.** Hundreds of campuses have developed small freshman-orientation courses to ease the transition from high school to college and to build student confidence in navigating the university setting. These classes vary greatly in staffing and content. Although some of these freshman seminars (also called University 101 or Freshman Year Experience classes) focus on study skills and other basic strategies for student success, others are more centered on content and on learning how to learn in a specific discipline.

Washington State University's freshman seminars have gone in a different direction: they use electronic technology, the academic content of a class, and collaborative learning to ask—and find answers to—academic questions. Freshman seminars at this institution are elective, two-credit offerings, again taught by undergraduate peer facilitators. A team of graduate students supervise the peer facilitators (at a ratio of about 1:5) and act as the faculty of record for the seminars, which are offered on a pass-fail basis. Each of the forty-five seminar sections (reaching about a quarter of WSU's freshman class) is attached to a large general education course, most often the university's required class in world civilization but also such introductory courses as political science, biological science, communications, sociology, anthropology, and geology. Some of these classes are medium enrollment (eighty to one hundred students) whereas others are much higher (two hundred to four hundred students). In the seminar, students meet in one of three classrooms specially designed for technology use and collaborative learning, and they receive and submit their weekly homework assignments on-line. They learn library and Internet research skills while at the same time how to ask questions appropriate to the discipline or specific content of the course they are taking together. The faculty members of the linked class get involved with coaching both the peer facilitator and the seminar participants, and giving feedback on the research questions. Research librarians also act as resources to every seminar group. The semester culminates in a big public celebration: a large poster session and multimedia fair mounted by all the seminars and attended by faculty and staff, university leadership, and local media. Jean Henscheid, formerly the coordinator of freshman programs for WSU's Student Advising and Learning Center and now associate director of the National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition at University of South Carolina, reports that students in the seminars "seem to perform better on problem solving, critical thinking, analyzing a situation, asking for help, understanding the content of the linked course, and accepting and tolerating different points of view. Our data indicate that the freshman seminar students generally outperform their peers in the same lecture class,

but the most dramatic gains are for the students whose intake profiles are at the lower end” (Jean Henscheid, personal interview with the author, Dec. 1998).

### **Linked Class Learning Communities**

In curricular learning communities, faculty members come more centrally into the picture as creators of social connections among students and intellectual connections among classes. In large university settings, the linked-class arrangement most often takes the form of a small-enrollment class being attached to a larger one.

**Wraparound Seminars.** For the past several years, Monica Devanas has been teaching Biomedical Issues of HIV/AIDS, the highest enrollment single-sectioned class (about 400 to 450 students) at Rutgers University that meets general education distribution requirements for sciences. In addition to creating a lively science class through a compelling and timely subject, the use of a technology-equipped “smart” classroom, occasional short turn-to-your-neighbor discussion activities in class, lots of guest presenters, and an option for students to gain extra credit through participation in one of many on-line discussion groups tied to the course, Devanas has established the option for students to enroll in one or more credit-bearing minicourses known as wraparound seminars. So in addition to studying the microbiology and epidemiology of AIDS, theories of infection, human immune system responses, and new research directions, students have the option of taking a credited course in any of a dozen disciplines, which extends their understanding of the disease into the social sciences or humanities. In recent years, wraparound seminars have included study in education, criminal justice, Africana studies, communications, English, human ecology, journalism, psychology, urban studies, and women’s studies. The political science department has incorporated the wraparound into HIV and Public Policy, a permanent three-credit course in the curriculum with an optional service-learning component, which students can take simultaneously with the HIV/AIDS course or before or after it.

Although Devanas has recruited some tenure-track faculty to teach a seminar, it has been more generally the case that the wraparounds have been taught by nontenured instructors or graduate TAs, usually doctoral students with research interests in HIV/AIDS. She compensates these wraparound hosts with small honoraria—“budget dust,” as she calls it—from the health education office on the campus. The seminars are generally small enrollment (fifteen to thirty students) and research- or project-oriented, creating little communities of interest and exploration within the larger HIV/AIDS class and an “enriched understanding of the relatedness of the disciplinary issues with the scientific knowledge to date, and the importance of psychosocial issues in global health crises” (Monica Devanas, personal interview with the author, Jan. 1999). Evaluations of the wraparound seminars

reveal that students who elect to take them have higher motivation for and gain higher grades in the large class.

**Linked Writing Courses.** From both inside and outside the academy we hear constant clarion calls for college graduates to be better writers. The past two decades have seen flurries of commitment to engage faculty and departments in “writing across the curriculum” efforts, so that students write more during their undergraduate careers and take writing more seriously in a range of courses. These WAC programs have spawned writing-intensive courses in the disciplines and in general education classes, as well as faculty development efforts geared toward enabling teachers to develop and respond to writing assignments in their specific classes. In recent years, some campuses have moved to incorporate writing competency tests or writing portfolios in their general education requirements. Still, most faculty outside English or journalism departments find it a challenging proposition to include writing in their courses, especially as enrollments grow.

In these same decades, another kind of WAC effort has been quietly emerging—writing in the disciplines, or WID. One major WID strategy involves linking writing courses to large general education lecture courses. Generally, one or more small subsets of students in a general education class simultaneously enroll in a writing class whose reading and writing work relates directly to the content of the larger class. The writing instructor and the lecture-course faculty member often collaborate on the development of the writing assignments and help students explore what it means to write in the discipline. These writing links can be found at any number of two- and four-year colleges, but two universities have mounted substantial writing-link programs specifically to give depth and content to required composition courses, to strengthen learning in large lecture courses, and to advance writing in the disciplines.

The University of Washington’s Interdisciplinary Writing Program (or IWP) has been in place since 1977. Sixty-five linked writing classes are offered each year, reaching about thirteen hundred students. Most of the links are to large general education courses such as political science, psychology, history of art, history, sociology, geography, international studies, and philosophy, although a few are linked to large-enrollment junior-level classes, such as Modern Political Theory and Developmental Psychology. Each year during fall term, almost all writing links are included in the university’s Freshman Interest Group program (described previously), creating an even more academically coherent experience for freshmen.

George Mason University began offering linked writing courses in 1986, and like the University of Washington, mounts a significant number of writing links (twenty-five to thirty-five) each year to social science and humanities courses and occasionally to biology and geology classes as well. At both institutions, there are frequently two linked writing sections in a large lecture class.

The teaching opportunities in a writing link are affected by the nature of the accompanying lecture course and the kind of collaboration between

the lecture-course teacher and the writing-course teacher. Some lecture courses are surveys in the most fragmented sense, and a writing teacher whose class is linked to such a survey must do much more independent work to define good writing tasks, to capture and deepen what is going by so fast in the lecture. Both the University of Washington and George Mason University work to identify lecture courses that build in an element of inquiry and conceptual tension even when enrollments are large. As Joan Graham, director of the IWP at UW puts it, “We seek out lectures that focus on questions, perhaps introducing students to the consequences of different theories, or modeling ways of evaluating different kinds of evidence. Writing assignments in such contexts are especially productive, and writing links carry students much further into lecture course issues and readings than they are otherwise likely to go. We often give students so much rich material and ask them to do so little with it! It is a constant irony” (Joan Graham, personal interview with the author, Oct. 1998).

At both institutions, the linked writing classes ask students to do a lot with the material. They require reading and research assignments that extend the content of the lecture class, and writing assignments to build connections and help students develop questions of their own. Peer writing groups are at the heart of the pedagogy of these classes. Linked writing students approach writing as a process of thinking, drafting, getting feedback, and redrafting: “We are studying our own writing and each other’s,” as Graham puts it. Students who enroll in these linked classes recognize that they are more demanding than stand-alone composition courses but point to the academic community and academic connections as key to their learning (Tinto and Goodsell, 1993). Professors teaching linked classes note that students naturally form study groups, engage in course-related conversations on their own, often exhibit better and more punctual attendance, and in many instances appear to be more capable of handling more complex ideas (George Mason University, 1996).

### **Course-Cluster Learning Communities**

These learning community models restructure students’ academic experiences further than the other models by creating larger arrangements of time and space for students to learn together. Course-cluster programs package three and even four classes to be taken simultaneously by a cohort of students. Most of these programs are targeted to entering students to provide a positive transition to university learning as well as a coherent general education experience. Some of these programs have worked entirely within the normal course-loading structures of the institution; others have made enrollment changes in some courses.

**The Freshman Year Initiative at CUNY-Queens College.** Queens College of the City University of New York is an urban commuter school where freshmen have historically been invisible in large-lecture course environments. The only small classes they might take as beginning students are

math and composition courses, often taught by adjunct faculty not deeply connected to the school. “Until the Freshman Year Initiative,” writes Judith Summerfield, the program’s director, “faculty had no sense of who the freshmen were, nor did the freshmen themselves. We wanted to create a freshman year—and a freshman culture. Our goal is to provide students with a coherent first year through a first semester in an academic community, where classes are taught by faculty (mostly full-timers) who have chosen to teach in the program” (Summerfield, 1998, p. 1). Queens now enrolls two-thirds of its freshman class (about six hundred students) in fourteen “academic communities” that cluster three classes: College English and two other classes. Figure 4.1 shows a typical Freshman Year Initiative cluster of courses at Queens College. Two sections of freshman composition join together for an introductory philosophy class, and this group of forty is a subset of a large sociology class.

Undergraduate teaching assistants, often Freshman Year Initiative (FYI) alumni, act as peer facilitators in the composition classes and sometimes in other classes as well. The program has been particularly successful in recruiting experienced, talented faculty genuinely interested in teaching this generation of freshmen. These teachers also welcome the dialogue with their cluster partners about their common students and teaching and learning issues. The FYI program has developed several informal but vitally important venues for community building: *Arkam* (a play on the fictional asylum in Batman comics), a room near the FYI office that is now the informal gathering and studying place for FYI-enrolled students; *ceilidhs* (a Celtic term for a story-telling and song-filled gathering), which are special events several times a semester for each community; and even a special FYI literary magazine. By all accounts, the program’s reputation for good teaching and community building has over a short span of years succeeded in creating the positive freshman culture its creators envisioned.

**Figure 4.1. Sample Community Structure in a Three-Course Block at CUNY-Queens College**

English 110 20 Students “Dedicated Course”	English 110 20 Students “Dedicated Course”
Philosophy 101 “Dedicated Course” 40 Students	
Sociology 180 Students Total 40 FYI Students	

**Triads at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi.** An upper-division and graduate school, Texas A&M-Corpus Christi began to plan in the early 1990s to “grow down” and enroll freshmen and sophomores in 1994. Intense planning for the needs of lower-division students and for a coherent general education experience for them resulted in an ambitious course-clustering program. In their first two semesters, all freshmen would enroll in groups of about two hundred in a “triad” of courses: two large-lecture classes that contained all of them and one of eight sections of English composition. Each composition section also met in a freshman seminar course that was convened by a graduate teaching assistant who also served as a grader in one of the large-lecture classes.

Figure 4.2 illustrates one of the triad offerings today, which generally carry ten to eleven semester credit hours. Two hundred students enroll in a political science course in American government and a related American history class. They subdivide into eight groups of about twenty-five, with each group taking a freshman composition course and a freshman seminar together.

The faculty members handling the lecture sections work to develop “touch points,” major points of intersection (or opposition) between their classes. The English composition instructors (a mix of tenured faculty, part-time instructors, and graduate teaching assistants) work collaboratively to create writing assignments related to the triad themes and teach all the writing classes in computer labs. To prepare to teach in this complex model, the graduate students involved in both the writing courses and the freshman seminars participate in an intensive summer institute prior to each academic year—an impressive commitment to the training and professional development of both teaching assistants and faculty. The triads program now serves about seven hundred incoming freshmen every year; they fulfill twenty to

**Figure 4.2. Triad Cluster at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi**

A general education lecture class: Introduction to American Government (200 students)							
A general education lecture class: U.S. History (200 students)							
These 200 are then divided into 8 sections (25 each) of English Composition and a Freshman Seminar, led by a graduate TA who also serves as a grader in one of the general education classes.							

twenty-one semester credits, or about 40 percent of the university's core curriculum requirements.

Several other campuses have put large cluster programs in place: Temple University in Philadelphia, University of Northern Colorado, Ball State University, and University of Texas, El Paso. UTEP's program is notable because the clusters are built as the intake ports for all students interested in majoring in engineering, mathematics, or the sciences, and in those clusters faculty are making substantial commitments to cooperative learning across all their classes. Clusters are developmentally tiered to serve both college-ready and underprepared students. Clusters like these can be powerful for students in making the large-university environment seem small. Indeed, many students comment that the real value of these programs is "being in small classes," even though they are still enrolled in some very large ones.

However, clustering courses is not without organizational challenges. These programs have the most impact on students when commitments are made to take seriously the building of community and to form some deliberate intellectual "glue" among the classes. Merely grouping the students in block registration cohorts may enable them to see each other in class, but if no effort is made to build community or take advantage of the learning possibilities that the related courses invite, the learning and the community remain in the shallows. Because many cluster programs include freshman-level composition or mathematics classes staffed by graduate teaching assistants, learning community program leaders must plan extensively for the recruitment, orientation, training, and ongoing support of these individuals to teach in the cluster setup. Program leaders also need to be thoughtful in recruiting faculty to these programs and willing to plan for predictable changes when faculty members take leaves or sabbaticals or make commitments to other courses. Some programs require coordination between faculty members and student affairs professionals or between faculty and peer facilitators. In many models, just three or four teachers coordinate a given cluster; however, at Texas A&M-Corpus Christi as many as ten to twelve faculty members and teaching assistants staff each triad offering. These programs require not only student collaboration but also faculty collaboration, or faculty-staff collaboration.

### **Learning Communities as Teaching Communities**

Obviously, these attempts to create structures that foster connections—among students, with coursework, with faculty or peer facilitators, and with their institutions—have been put in place to foster greater learning on the part of the *students*, and increased *student* success in college. Evaluation data on these programs indicate that they live up to their intentions. What we have yet to give emphasis to or evaluate is how these programs affect the faculty, staff, and students who create and deliver them. We also have yet to assess the impact these programs will have, over time, on the institutions in which they reside.

As many involved with cooperative and collaborative learning have commented, small-group learning can be powerful for students. It brings the otherwise private acts of understanding and reasoning, responding and questioning out into the open, into the sometimes unpredictable glare of public scrutiny (Whipple, 1987; MacGregor, 1990; Millis and Cottell, 1998). Although this can be unfamiliar and challenging, especially at first, these collaborative learning experiences can also be provocative, informative, and valuable—that is, the stuff of long-lasting learning.

The collaborative teaching that occurs in these kinds of programs is not dissimilar. It takes our otherwise private acts of solo teaching into a new arena of shared responsibility, shared students, and often shared curriculum. Through this collaboration often comes immediate feedback on the learning and dynamics that are unfolding week by week. This very public work can be unfamiliar and challenging too, as well as intriguing and valuable.

We hear repeatedly from the faculty members, students, and student affairs professionals involved in these programs how worthwhile it is to teach in them. They describe how team-planning or team-teaching a program opens fascinating windows on their discipline and their teaching. They speak about feeling connected to a larger enterprise. They reflect on the value of working closely with colleagues. They point to the sense of belonging they feel in a large, sometimes faceless institution. These comments remind us that it is not just students who feel alienated by large-class environments. Faculty, staff members, and teaching assistants are affected too. The new collaborative structures require a great deal of energy to create and sustain, yet they create important pockets of community as well as a vision of deeper practice in our institutions.

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