EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
The current structure of the Thematic Learning Communities (TLCs), which pairs two existing courses with a one-hour seminar course, is endorsed for continuation and other models that expand upon this structure are proposed for future consideration. The TLC program needs immediate funding and a staff to carry out the provision of this service. Peer Educator and Faculty Facilitator roles are promoted as vital to the TLC model, and recommendations are made for provision of training for these groups. Some initial strategy is offered for recruitment and marketing of TLCs to faculty and students. A Request for Programs (RFP) is provided for guiding the initiation of new TLCs.

OVERVIEW OF PROCESS
The TLC Priority group was given the following charge:

Develop a model to increase the overall number of students who participate in TLCs to 2,000 by Fall 2008. Include the resources needed and a specific timeline.

The stated outcome is to “position the University to implement an expansion of TLCs starting with Fall 2004.”

Twenty-two people served on the TLC Priority group, including Diana Robertson as Leader, and Kathryn Nemeth Tuttle as Facilitator (see membership list in Appendix I). The group met 5 times beginning on January 21, 2004. They met approximately every 3 weeks. Several articles were distributed to the group to attain some common understanding of the history, structuring, and benefits of learning communities.

Six people attended a “Learning Communities Open House” at Iowa State University at the end of February. Attendees represented the following areas of campus: Student Housing, KU Libraries, University Career Center, Financial Aid, and the TLC program. A report written after the conference is available on the Student Success priorities web page at: www.vpss.ku.edu/priorities.

Priority group members reviewed websites of various schools to learn more about the structure and composition of learning communities around the country. A phone survey was conducted with nine schools to learn more about how they staff and fund their learning communities. Schools that were contacted are: University of Illinois, Maryland, Michigan, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oregon, Washington, Wisconsin and UCLA.

The following sub-groups were developed based on components identified as critical to developing a TLC model:

1) Curricular Structure
2) Staffing / Funding
3) Recruitment / Marketing
4) Assessment
5) Training / Development
Sub-groups met independently, as needed, to complete their tasks. Sub-group findings were brought to the all-group meetings for discussion and refinement. Each sub-group developed a report of their recommendations for action or items for further pursuit.

SUB-GROUP REPORTS

1) Curricular Structure

Academic goals that each Thematic Learning Community should strive to meet are:

- **Seamless learning environments.** Emphasize to students that opportunities to learn are not limited to the traditional classroom. Educational experiences exist everywhere: in yourself, in each other, in the residential environment, and in the larger community (e.g., Service Learning).

- **Interdisciplinary inquiry.** Problems know no boundaries. To find the *solutions* to a problem—many questions do not have one “right” answer—we may have to cross the boundaries that demarcate traditionally defined disciplines, address the problem from several different perspectives or levels of analysis, or pose questions that are not typically asked in a given field (i.e., Ask *Why?* in addition to *How?*).

- **Collegiality.** By breaking down some of the intimidating barriers that can exist between students and faculty (and the institution/University), education can become a personalized and humanizing experience.

- **Collaboration.** Students experience a sense of community with fellow TLC participants as they work collaboratively to define their career and educational goals. Faculty members also experience a sense of community, a connectedness to other faculty and to the institution through participation in interdisciplinary teaching and learning.

- **Global awareness and citizenry.** Preparing students to engage in the greater global community is an institutional commitment. All undergraduate students are encouraged to participate in research, service learning, or study abroad opportunities.

To attain these goals, a number of learning community models are proposed. These models will enable the Thematic Learning Communities to both grow and evolve over time. The possible structures fall into one of four general categories:

A) First Semester Communities (with an emphasis on incoming freshmen)
   1. Traditional model (LA&S 101 TLC Seminar and two courses)
   2. Expanded model (LA&S 101 TLC Seminar and three or more courses)

B) Second Semester Communities
   1. Continue LA&S 101 TLC Seminar only
   2. Continue LA&S 101 TLC Seminar and other related courses
   3. Communities of courses only offered in the Spring

C) Communities Beyond the Second Semester

D) Communities Without Courses
Within the next three years, significant growth can be achieved in communities that fall into categories A, B, and D. Development of communities in categories C and D may be initiated at the same time, with significant growth in these categories expected in years three through six. Each of these structures is further described below.

Category A: First Semester Communities
The primary recommendation is to increase the number of “Traditional TLCs”, which consist of two existing courses and a one-hour seminar course (LA&S 101) offered in the fall semester for incoming freshmen, with each TLC having a Peer Educator assigned to work closely with that community. Approximately three-fourths of the TLCs will be “residential,” meaning that the students will live together on the same floor of a residence hall and a Peer Educator will live with them. Other TLCs will be set up as “undesignated housing” and students can participate while living anywhere (in an apartment or house in town, in a fraternity, or at home with their family, for example). TLCs with undesignated housing will also have a Peer Educator who will bring the students together in a mutually convenient location, such as the Kansas Memorial Union, for study sessions and other events or activities.

Some possible new themes for TLCs are:
- First generation students – To provide a support structure and guidance that might not exist for these students.
- Language/culture – Examples may include a Spanish Language/Culture TLC, or a German Language/Culture TLC. Would increase the number of academic departments involved in the TLC program, and provide many opportunities for extracurricular activities (such as Latin-American cultural events/dance club, dance lessons, October fest, etc.)

Initiating and increasing the number of “Expanded TLCs” is also recommended. Expanded TLCs would consist of the LA&S 101 seminar and three or more courses, geared toward first-year students, and addressing broader or more complex themes. Expanded TLCs might allow for larger TLC groups, moving beyond the current size of approximately 20 students, to perhaps 40 or more students in each TLC.

Category B: Second Semester Communities
Offering TLCs during the spring semester would allow for building on the topics and cohesion that started in the TLC during the fall semester. One option would be to continue just the LA&S 101 class to build on issues and topics discussed during the fall. A second option would be to offer one to three courses and the seminar class during the spring semester as a continuation of the first semester theme (or one that is closely related).

Offering new TLCs in the spring would provide opportunities for first-year students to get involved in learning communities if they didn’t participate in a TLC during the fall.

Category C: Communities Beyond the Second Semester
Several types of learning communities are recommended for involving students beyond their freshman year. The first of these is Upperclass TLCs (U-TLCs). To initiate these, participants in freshman TLCs would be targeted during their sophomore, junior and senior years. Students who did not participate in TLCs during their freshman year could also participate. The majority of U-TLCs would not be residential.

Faculty who are interested in more intensive cross-disciplinary or team-teaching opportunities would be targeted for U-TLCs. These might be designed as what is dubbed a “mega-course” where there is one theme or “course” that is worth six credit hours; two instructors get three credit hours each. For example, a course might meet for three hours, twice a week to discuss an interdisciplinary topic. Class meetings may take the form of alternating lectures/sections by
faculty, with both faculty members always there to address “both sides” of the issue. MATH 250 might serve as a model for the structure of a “mega-course.”

The second structure for TLCs beyond the second semester would be targeted to commuter students at the Edwards Campus. Commuter students may tend to feel isolated or disconnected in their educational process. TLCs would provide them a cohort for shared experience, study groups, and socialization. The “mega-course” might be easier to implement at the Edwards Campus, as it is already flexible with regard to scheduling. Such a structure might also appeal to these students, who are often described as more pragmatic, because paired courses could include a theoretical class and a class that applies the theory.

Another recommendation is to consider an expanded language and/or culture TLC. Culture and language may be combined or independent. That is, this structure may be defined more broadly to include everyone that is interested in a particular culture, or more narrowly to encompass those interested in speaking a particular language. Students would not have to be majoring in a particular language, but may have an interest in a particular region or culture. Study Abroad students visiting KU may want to participate.

Category D: Communities Without Courses
The same language or culture TLC could be developed without a formal enrollment requirement. A Peer Educator would still be desirable for this type of TLC. Or, in a residential TLC, it might be preferable to recruit a Resident Assistant who is experienced in the particular language or culture and perhaps provided some additional compensation. A variation of the language/culture TLC might be to have a curricular component for first-year students, but not require courses for upperclass students who participate.

Another type of TLC that might be formed without a curricular component is one that would enable TLCs to mingle or work together on a project. For instance, students interested in Engineering, Design, Art, Psychology, Human Development, and Environmental Studies could come together to design and then build a playground for the community. Students interested in Journalism could write copy to promote the issue (perhaps leading to donations of finances, materials, or labor). Other fields could emphasize different issues that should be considered in the design, such as deriving cognitive as well as physical stimulation from the playground equipment/space, landscaping issues, making the equipment accessible to all children, designing visually attractive toys that will withstand the use they will receive as well as the elements, incorporating new/ environmentally friendly materials into the equipment, and so forth. The benefits of this TLC structure are that it broadens the scope of many themes, incorporates service-learning into the experience, and enhances inter-disciplinary communication.

2) Staffing / Funding
This sub-group focused on five primary issues:
   a) Staffing structure for the TLC program
   b) Funding for the TLC program
   c) Fee assessment
   d) Faculty Facilitator compensation
   e) Peer Educator role and compensation

Staffing Structure for the TLC Program
A TLC office with a full-time director and supporting staff needs to be established to sustain and grow this program. Many learning community programs around the country report to a Dean of Undergraduate Studies (or similar role). We do not have such an office on our campus, yet central coordination of the program appears critical. Some programs around the country are coordinated by their Student Success area or their Housing departments, but that is typically on
campuses where there are occupancy challenges and the Housing department is motivated to aggressively market their bed spaces. That is not the case at the University of Kansas, where we consistently have high occupancy in the halls.

It is recommended that the TLC Director position report through the Provost’s office, particularly since the program initiated there. This is viewed to be significant on two fronts: funding and faculty involvement. The endorsement of the Provost’s office is influential in recruiting faculty, and is perceived to have potential for direct connection to funding for such a recruitment and retention oriented program.

Funding for the TLC Program
Funding for learning communities is urgently needed and should come from the Provost’s Office. The TLC program is expensive to operate, but potential return on investment is excellent. We can anticipate improved retention and the development of an undergraduate campus climate that is academically vibrant. The tuition dollars of those students retained will help sustain the program financially. At some institutions, the academic units involved in the learning communities fund the program. At KU, we oppose that funding model because the academic units do not have additional dollars to put into the program, and because that would keep some units (particularly the smaller ones) from participating in TLCs. If we want broad participation in the program, then the funding needs to come from the Provost’s Office and all units should be encouraged to participate.

Fee Assessment
Some institutions assess participation fees, believing that if students have invested additional money to participate, they are more apt to take the program seriously. It is our recommendation that we not assess participation fees here at KU. Students are already experiencing a fairly rapid increase in tuition and fees, and adding another fee is unlikely to enhance participation in TLCs. Instead, we feel that institutional commitment to the merits of the program should be demonstrated by institutional funding for the TLC program, perhaps from tuition enhancement dollars.

Faculty Facilitator Compensation
Most learning community programs reward faculty somewhat generously for participating in learning communities. We’ve heard anything from “faculty will participate for a Coke and a brownie” to institutions that pay faculty an additional $1,600 per semester to teach in the learning community. Minimally, KU should provide $500 professional development stipends to those serving as Faculty Facilitators in the TLC program. Our recommendation of $500 is moderate, but provides some tangible incentive to faculty to stretch themselves to connect with students in a different and meaningful interdisciplinary way.

Peer Educator Role and Compensation
There is great consensus that the PE role is a vital component of the TLC program. Compensation for these student roles varies on campuses around the country. Some are volunteer positions that have no teaching component. Some include the teaching component, like here at KU, but compensate at a lesser rate than we do. We expect a lot from PEs, and it is preferable to continue to have PEs living with the residential TLC participants. However, the current compensation of room and board is quite costly. A concern has also been raised about the effect of requiring PEs to live in on-campus housing once the program has grown to include 60-70 residential TLCs. Those 60-70 bed spaces might be needed for first-year students. And the current cost of compensating room and board for 60 PEs is in excess of $340,000.
A compensation rate must be established that is not tied to room and board, and the expense needs to be incorporated in the TLC budget. Student Housing has funded the PE compensation in this inaugural year, but that should not continue as the program expands. A rate of compensation needs to fairly reward the residential PEs for approximately twelve hours of work each week, and the PEs working with TLCs with undesignated housing for approximately eight hours of work each week. (It is estimated that PEs work 31 weeks in an academic year, including one week of training in August.) The going rate of pay for student hourly employees on campus is about $6.50 per hour. In order to attract and retain a high quality staff, it is recommended that PE compensation be set at a rate greater than this. It is also suggested that PEs be paid in the form of a stipend, rather than at an hourly rate, because their role includes unscheduled student contact and role modeling. (A similar model is used by Student Housing for compensating Resident Assistants.)

We recommend that residential PEs be paid a stipend of $3,500 per school year, and PEs for TLCs without undesignated housing be compensated with a stipend of $2,190. We recommend that the academic units supervise the PEs, meaning that in most cases the Faculty Facilitator is the supervisor. The TLC office will provide training to PEs and FFs, and will work collaboratively with FFs to support their supervisory role.

3) Recruitment / Marketing
This sub-group benefitted from guidance by faculty in the Business department. They began by conducting a SWOT Analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) of the TLC program. They then provided some strategic planning and recommended marketing strategies and tactics.

SWOT Analysis
STRENGTHS (what TLCs can offer students)
- Close interaction with faculty/staff
- PE as a resource and to facilitate development of study groups
- Connection to field of study
- Good collaboration from student service offices, including DSH, FSAC, such as, “You will have an advisor assigned to your TLC.”

WEAKNESSES
- No word of mouth yet
- Funding – difficult to project what we are able to spend:
  - Publications- how much money to spend on publications
  - Mailings- how much money for postage, essentials (envelopes, flyers, etc.)
  - Faculty facilitator recruiting
  - Understaffed for expectations
- Program is still in its early stages – it will be a learning process that takes time to unfold
- Marketing inexperience
- Attracting PEs - upperclass students who want to help other students and who are, in most cases, willing to live in on-campus housing

OPPORTUNITIES
- Serve students; help them to focus academically and improve retention
- As the TLC program grows, it can include more fields of study
- Will be able to draw on participants’ good experiences to help shape the program in the future
- Cross-collaboration between faculty could lead to additional research grants
THREATS
• Probably not an issue for TLCs

Strategic Planning
The overall marketing objective is defined as having 2,000 students involved in TLCs by 2008. Accomplishing this means adding approximately 15 TLCs each year. This also requires approximately 15 more faculty facilitators, 15 more peer educators, and 300 more participants per year.

The recruitment of faculty needs to be planful. It is important to make sure that Deans, department chairs and faculty members know about the TLC program and its merits. Preparing a recruitment brochure for faculty, along with TLC web site information specifically for faculty, will be important to this endeavor. Faculty need to be informed of how the program will benefit them and how it will impact their teaching. They will have questions about the effect that involvement in TLCs would have on their class load, contribution to tenure and promotion, whether there is any compensation involved, and so forth.

In recruiting students, it will be useful to segment the market to identify how to best promote the TLC program. Target markets to consider in the future are:

• In-state v. out-of-state students
• Rural v. urban students
• Parents v. students
• Residential v. undesignated housing preferences
• Academic majors v. undecided students

It is recommended to further research whether other schools market differently to the various markets listed above. The key will be to determine how to best position this program for recognition and to gain students’ interest. As a “product” that is unfamiliar to prospective students and parents, it is important to get the TLC program name in front of them repeatedly, as familiarity will breed interest.

Marketing Strategies and Tactics
In looking at the TLC program as a “product” to be marketed, it is important to identify the attributes of this product. Results of a survey conducted with TLC participants last fall indicate that TLCs assist with the following:

• Getting involved/learning more about field of interest
• Close interaction with faculty
• Easier adjustment to college life
• Integrating material from involved courses
• Making friends with peers in a given field
• Getting help with classes (study groups, PE and peer support)

In terms of promoting the TLC program, the focus obviously needs to be on students and their parents. It is also recommended to promote the program with high school counselors, KU Admissions staff, academic departments within KU, and the campus community in general. “Connections” is a theme that might be played upon in promotional materials:
• **Connections** between paired courses
• Getting **connected** to KU/field of study
• **Connect** to faculty/research in field of study
• **Connect** to peers interested in same subject

It will be helpful to work with various departments/schools to promote the TLC associated with their academic area. This might include International Student Services and the Honors Program, as well.

Future evaluation of the program should include marketing information, specifically related to scheduling and timing. It will be important to assess if the current marketing timeline is working. Specific questions to answer include:

- When is the best time to approach students/parents?
- Is the schedule timed appropriately with application availability, TLC proposal timeline, and so forth.
- What kind of timeframe is necessary for working with the Enrollment Center?
- How did students hear about TLCs? ("Check all that apply" on the application form.)

**4) Assessment**

Assessment is recommended at both the instructor level and at the TLC program level. At the instructor level, assessment should be both pedagogical as well as directed to the accomplishment of specific teaching goals. The TLC Request for Programs document provides a structure for recording the assessment plans for each individual TLC.

At the TLC program level, effectiveness needs to be assessed in terms of individual student progress, as well as longitudinal tracking of students’ GPAs, retention, and graduation data. Surveys of student satisfaction, Peer Educator and faculty feedback need to be collected annually. The TLC program staff also should develop a means of demonstrating learning outcomes by utilization of faculty’s assessment (learning products) or perhaps through participant portfolios.

This year’s TLC assessment activities have been the following:

- Pre/post satisfaction surveys (30 out of 130 returned the post-survey)
- National Survey of Student Engagement
- Retention data
- GPAs
- Focus groups with TLC students (why they participated, perceived benefits of TLCs, satisfaction level)

The challenge is to assess “outputs.” It will be helpful to look at how TLC participation impacts students’ likeliness to engage in other activities (research, community service, study abroad). The TLC program should consider modeling efforts to track such information from programs that are already doing so, such as Biology (research involvement) and International Programs (global awareness program).

Dan Bernstein from the Center for Teaching Excellence has been working on the development of a “teaching gallery prototype” that seeks to demonstrate learning outcomes. He has put together information related to Mike Vitevitch’s TLC, “Mind, Brain, and Behavior.” It has potential to serve as a faculty recruitment piece for TLCs, and could also be adapted for use in recruiting students, addressing parents, or for informing groups such as the Board of Regents. It provides an excellent record for assessing TLCs and has a goal of making teaching visible.
5) **Training / Development**

**Peer Educators**
For the 2004-2005 year, the majority of the TLCs will be residential, so the Peer Educators will live on the floor with the TLC participants. It is a good idea to coordinate some of the training efforts with Student Housing staff training. As with the past year, the TLC Coordinator will work with the person organizing RA/Proctor training to participate in the following:

- Training sessions for common topics, such as alcohol awareness, information fair, and diversity
- Defining roles between residential PEs and RAs
- Team-building between residential PEs and RAs
- Housing emergency procedures

Other topics the PEs should receive training for are general learning community and TLC goals, PE expectations, ethics, learning styles, classroom teaching styles, group facilitation, confidentiality/FERPA, community building, out-of-class programming, first-year transition issues, leadership theory, goal setting, working with faculty, and interpersonal communication.

Ongoing training should be held on a monthly basis for the PEs to review the previously listed topics, participate in team-building exercises and discuss issues as a team to find creative ways to solve the challenges they may be facing. This could be facilitated by a TLC staff member. The ongoing trainings should also be seen as a means to develop these students as a unique community of student leaders.

For PE Training in 2005-06 and beyond, the TLC program should adopt the Iowa State University model where the Faculty Facilitator is responsible for the recruitment, supervision and evaluation of their peer educator(s). The Request for Proposals (RFP) form recommends that each TLC make use of a PE as part of their community and provides information about the compensation that is provided for PEs. The TLC office will assist with training and will make training recommendations based on the proposed role of the PE stated on the RFP. This will include an initial training before classes begin as well as ongoing training sessions to keep the PEs abreast of important academic deadlines, events or policy changes.

It will be important to have strong communication between the Faculty Facilitator and TLC staff providing the training. In addition, if the PE is to live in on-campus housing, there may be need for co-supervision of the PE by a Housing staff member. The TLC coordinator can initiate the necessary conversations to address this need.

Challenges may arise from the different expectations that FFs may have of their PEs. There may be specific training needs not required of all PEs which will need to be handled individually. Also, if a FF chooses to take on the responsibility for much of the training, it may be difficult to ensure consistency.

**Faculty Training & Development**
TLC goals, structure, guidance and means to share ideas should be provided to the faculty facilitators to help them be successful in their role. The following suggestions are offered for faculty training:

- Continue to offer workshops in the spring for new facilitators before they begin to create their syllabus. These workshops should cover TLC goals and expectations, ways to create interdisciplinary learning and idea sharing from experienced FFs.
- Offer on-going venues for discussion as a means to share experiences and work to develop a community among faculty facilitators.
- Experienced FFs can serve as contacts or mentors for new FFs considering participating in the program, help them create their seminar course, or be a general resource.
- Keep FFs informed of learning community conferences and other opportunities to network and share their experiences with colleagues from other universities and colleges.
- Provide resources such as sample syllabi and helpful websites that equip the FF with a variety of tools to enhance the seminar course and community activities.

**RFP/MODEL**

After some of the group members attended the Learning Communities Open House in Ames, Iowa, it was suggested that one way to frame the TLC model would be to utilize a “Request for Proposals” (RFP) document, similar to that used by Iowa State University. The document serves as a tool to guide faculty in the development of a TLC, articulating the goals and components of a successful learning community. The RFP serves as a micro model for TLCs (see Appendix II and Appendix III).

The RFP will be distributed to faculty late in the spring semester (or early in the summer) so they have ample time to coordinate with colleagues, their academic department, or others to develop a TLC proposal. Proposals will be due on October 1st. This timeline allows for sufficient time for review of RFPs and notification of faculty members in advance of needing to recruit Peer Educators by the middle of the spring semester.

**OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS**

a) An on-going Steering Committee should be appointed. This group should include representation from Student Housing, Freshman-Sophomore Advising Center, Faculty Facilitators, Peer Educators, Student Development Center, KU Libraries, Center for Teaching Excellence, University Career Center, academic departments, and the TLC Office.

b) Continue to examine course components, particularly the inclusion of freshman English courses.

c) Further explore interdisciplinary courses in relation to faculty teaching loads and department commitments and expectations.

**IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE**

The issues or recommendations needing the most immediate attention (by early summer 2004) are:

- TLC budget
- TLC staffing
- TLC office space
- RFP distribution
- Plan and schedule PE and FF training
- Develop longitudinal tracking plan for TLC program and assessment plan for 2004-2005
Items to be pursued during the fall semester (2004) are:
- Establishing a TLC Steering Committee
- FF and PE recruitment plans and materials (includes looking at target markets with Admissions staff and FFs, and further developing the CTE “teaching gallery” for TLCs)
- Develop marketing plan for prospective participants

Items to be addressed on an ongoing basis are:
- Assessment / data collection
- Funding
- Curricular models
- Expansion of TLCs beyond the freshman year

RESOURCES NEEDED
The resources needed to pursue these recommendations are:
- TLC budget
- TLC staffing
- Provost Office endorsement and encouragement of faculty participation
- Institutional commitment to marketing the program (participation on behalf of academic departments/colleges, Admissions, New Student Orientation, and Student Housing)
- Assistance in longitudinal tracking from the Office of Institutional Research and Planning (OIRP)
APPENDIX I

Priority: Expansion of Thematic Learning Communities

Facilitator: Kathryn Nemeth Tuttle, Associate Vice Provost for Student Success

Leader: Diana Robertson, Student Housing

Participants: Linda Dixon, Interim TLC Coordinator
Jessica Pauls, Admissions & Scholarships
Wendy Rohleder-Sook, Freshman-Sophomore Advising Center
Rebecca Bailey, Office of Multicultural Affairs
Mary Ann Rasnak, Student Development Center & Services for Students with Disabilities
Scott Sponholtz, Student Financial Aid
Shirley Cahill, UCES-CCPS
Marla Herron, University Registrar
Dan Bernstein, Center for Teaching Excellence
Rob Weaver, CLAS Associate Dean
Lisa St. Ledger, English
Lisa Leroux-Smith, Business
Rick Hale, Engineering
Sara Rochford, Fine Arts
Glen White, Human Development & Family Life
Mike Vitevitch, Psychology
Beth Kimberly, Peer Educator
The Office of the Provost and the Office of the Vice Provost for Student Success invite proposals from the university community for Thematic Learning Communities (TLCs) for the 2005-2006 academic year. Proposals to initiate new and continuing TLCs are being accepted until October 1, 2004. This RFP is available online at: www.tlc.ku.edu.

Faculty and staff are asked to utilize the instructions document which is available with this RFP. Examples of previous TLCs and contact information for faculty/staff who have been involved with TLCs are available at the TLC website. Questions regarding submission of proposals should be directed to Linda Dixon, Interim TLC Coordinator, at 864-0187 or ldixon@ku.edu. Proposals are due to Linda Dixon at the TLC office, 213 Strong Hall, by 5pm on Oct. 1, 2004.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION
Development of the TLC program was initiated by the Provost’s Office in Fall 2002 with a goal of enhancing the retention, connection, and academic success of KU undergraduates. The program began in 2003-2004 with 130 participants in 11 learning communities. The intent is to expand the program to involve over 2000 students in thematic learning communities.

TLC PROGRAM GOALS
TLCs are intended to contribute to the following academic goals:

- **Seamless learning environments.** Emphasize to students that opportunities to learn extend beyond the traditional classroom. Educational experiences exist everywhere: in themselves, in each other, in the living environment, and in the larger community (e.g. Service Learning).

- **Interdisciplinary inquiry.** Problems know no boundaries. To find the solutions to a problem (many questions do not have one “right” answer) we may have to cross the boundaries that demarcate traditionally defined disciplines, address the problem from several difference perspectives and levels of analysis, or pose questions that are not typically asked in a given field (i.e. “Why?” in addition to “How?”)

- **Collegiality.** By breaking down some of the intimidating barriers that exist between students and faculty (and the institution/University), education can become a personalized and humanizing experience.

- **Collaboration.** Faculty experience a sense of community, a connectedness to other faculty and to the institution through participation in interdisciplinary teaching and learning.

- **Global awareness and citizenry.** Preparing students to engage in the greater global community is an institutional commitment. All undergraduate students are encouraged to participate in research, service learning, or study abroad opportunities. Additionally, TLC proposals will be evaluated on their potential to:

  - Foster an integrated learning experience in which course content is connected and course participants interact
  - Build strong, collaborative partnerships between academic and student support services
  - Address clearly articulated learning outcomes through a specific assessment plan
  - Promote enhanced success of students in under-represented groups
  - Facilitate first-year students’ integration into the university community and extend to the full academic year
  - Integrate a well-defined plan for Peer Educators
THEMATIC LEARNING COMMUNITY PROPOSAL FOR 2005-2006

Complete the following information related to the proposed TLC. Please refer to the RFP instructions for guidance in completing this information. See www.tlc.ku.edu/.

1. Name of Learning Community _____________________________________________

2. Target Audience ________________________________________________________

3. Description of TLC _____________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

4. Courses included in TLC:

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<th>Department</th>
<th>Course #</th>
<th>Course Name</th>
<th>Fall or Spring</th>
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5. This TLC will be: (check ALL that apply)

- [ ] One semester (Fall)  - [ ] Residential
- [ ] Two semesters (Fall & Spring)  - [ ] Undesignated housing

6. These courses will be: (check one)

- [ ] Clustered  - [ ] Linked

If linked, what cross-curricular connections will be made to achieve the integrated learning outcome?

7. Will the LA&S 101 TLC Seminar be offered as part of this TLC?  - [ ] Yes  - [ ] No

If “no,” please explain:

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
8. Faculty Facilitator (correspondence will be directed to this PRIMARY contact person):

Name ____________________________________________
Campus Address ____________________________________
Campus Phone ______________________________________
Email Address ______________________________________

9. List other faculty or staff who will be involved with this TLC:

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<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
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</table>

10. What specific plans do you have for direct involvement of course faculty with the TLC?

11. Are there partnerships with Student Success or other university units that you intend to foster and incorporate in this TLC? (Describe and explain.)

12. Describe your plans for recruiting and selecting a Peer Educator (PE):

13. If your TLC is residential, will the PE be required to live with the participants in on-campus housing:  □ Yes □ No □ N/A
14. Describe your plans for supervising and evaluating the PE:

15. Describe ways that you (or your department) will assist with marketing of this TLC:

16. Will additional compensation be offered to the PE?  □ Yes  □ No

If yes, please describe: ______________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
## 17. Learning Outcomes Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intended Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Source of Outcome Goal</th>
<th>Specific TLC Experience Designed to Meet Outcomes</th>
<th>Assessment Methodologies for Intended Outcomes</th>
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18. Who will coordinate the outcomes assessment for this TLC?
19. Describe any activities or events that you plan to incorporate in the TLC expectations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event/Activity</th>
<th>Educational Outcome</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Dept. $ Contribution</th>
<th>Funding amount requested from TLC Budget</th>
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20. Describe any additional form(s) of support or commitment your department will provide to this TLC:

RFP and instructions are available online at: [www.tlc.ku.edu/](http://www.tlc.ku.edu/).

Proposals are due to Linda Dixon at the TLC office, 213 Strong Hall, by 5pm on Oct. 1, 2004.

(This RFP is adapted from the RFP used by Iowa State University learning communities.)
Appendix III

Thematic Learning Communities (TLCs)
RFP Instructions
2005-2006

This “instructions” document was created to assist in the submission of TLC proposals. Each item in the TLC Proposal form is addressed below. Feel free to contact the TLC Coordinator, Linda Dixon, at 864-0187 or ldixon@ku.edu if you have questions or would like to discuss your TLC proposal ideas. Former Faculty Facilitators who are also available to assist you are:

Mike Vitevitch  Wendy Rohleder-Sook
Psychology  Freshman-Sophomore Advising Center
864-9312  864-2896
mvitevit@ku.edu  wrohled@ku.edu

1. Name of Learning Community
Creativity is encouraged in developing a title for your TLC. However, keep in mind that these are primarily marketed to incoming freshmen. Many students at this age understand things that are concrete (i.e. “My major is Pre-Business so I need to be in the Business TLC”). If the title of the TLC is too abstract, the students may overlook your TLC for one that makes sense to them. If the students don’t understand it, they won’t apply for it. For some students, the course or department is appealing to them, so if you are proposing a History theme, including the word History somewhere in the title might be a good idea.

2. Target Audience
A broad target audience is strongly encouraged. Most of the TLCs are for any student in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, but TLCs are also offered for students in Engineering, Fine Arts, Business, and other professional schools. The TLCs are called “thematic” because most of the communities are built on themes as opposed to majors. Creating too narrow an audience may reduce the pool of students that may otherwise wish to participate in your community. Typically, those TLCs with a more narrowly defined target audience are in professional schools and require students to be admitted into the school before they will be accepted in the TLC.

3. Description of TLC
Describe the proposed TLC in 50 words or less. This description should be suitable for use in TLC marketing materials. Keep it simple and to the point, yet seek to provoke curiosity or convey a sense of usefulness.

4. Choosing Courses to include in the TLC
Things to consider when choosing the courses to include in your TLC:

a) Does the course fulfill a general education requirement?
TLCs are marketed by promoting the fact that nearly all the courses involved will fulfill general education requirements, so most students can participate in the community without it being their major.

b) Are there prerequisites for the courses you chose?
Although many incoming freshmen are transferring AP credit or credit for college courses taken while in high school, choosing courses with prerequisites can narrow the pool of students that are able to participate. An example is EECS 128. It fulfills a general education requirement, but the prerequisite is eligibility to enroll in MATH 115. That may leave out any student who has not satisfied that requirement.

It is highly recommended that the courses you choose either fulfill major requirements or principle course requirements. A list of principle courses is available at: http://www.registrar.ku.edu/timetable/049pnwc_report.pdf.

5) Length and Type of TLC
Most TLCs require the paired courses for the fall semester only. (The LA&S 101 course will only be offered in the fall semester.) If you would like the participants to have the option of taking a follow-up course in the spring semester, you may designate “two semesters” on the form and the TLC Coordinator will seek to reserve the spots for students who want to participate in this option. (Please indicate which course or courses you would want to involve in the spring semester under Item #4.)

Residential TLCs - Participants live together on the same floor of a residence hall. There are approximately 60-70 students on a floor and typically no more than 20 TLC participants, so they will be able to make friends and associate with others not in their TLC. Students may request a roommate who is not participating in the TLC.

   **Benefits of Residential** – A Peer Educator lives on the floor with the TLC students and is easily accessible to them. Study groups are easy to form in this environment, and participants tend to develop a sense of community. This option includes working collaboratively with Residence Life staff to facilitate programming, activities, and group dynamics that can enhance the TLC experience.

Undesignated Housing – Students can live anywhere and still participate in this TLC option. The Peer Educator brings the participants together in an accessible location (e.g. the Memorial Union) for study sessions and activities.

   **Benefits of Undesignated Housing** – Over 70% of freshmen live in on-campus housing, while the remainder lives off-campus. We want to provide opportunities for those students who live off-campus, in fraternities, or those who would like to live in a hall that is not ‘home’ to a particular TLC.

6. Explanation of curricular models
Clustered Courses – Students take courses together as a cohort group, but the curricula of those courses are not necessarily integrated.

Linked Courses – Students take courses together as a cohort group, and the curricula of two or more classes are connected. Content of courses is coordinated between faculty.

To date, the majority of TLCs have been clustered. A goal has been set to move toward more linked TLCs.

Cross-curricular connections might include assignments in one course that dovetail with content from another course involved in the TLC.
7. **LA&S Seminar**
This one credit course is designed to introduce students to the University community by exploring an academic theme and the connections between general education courses. Students may explore strategies for a successful academic transition through time management, study skills, major and career exploration, and utilization of University academic resources.

Typically, TLCs incorporate the LA&S 101 seminar unless the one-credit hour elective does not fit into the academic program, as is the case with some professional schools. Some TLCs have incorporated a seminar course offered within their college or department or some other regularly scheduled group meeting instead of the LA&S 101 TLC Seminar. If this is your intent, indicate the course name and number you will incorporate (if applicable), and explain the role this course or group meeting will play in your TLC.

8. **Faculty Facilitator**
The Faculty Facilitator is the person who will be responsible for the facilitation of the LA&S 101 101 TLC Seminar course or the TLC meetings. Some of you will choose to co-facilitate the seminar course with another person. List only the primary contact person who will communicate directly with the TLC staff.

9. **Other Faculty or Staff**
This includes instructors for involved courses, and any other individual who will be assisting with the TLC.

10. **Plans for Direct Involvement of Faculty**
There are a variety of ways for course faculty to be involved in the TLCs:
   a) Planning the seminar course according to the syllabi of the paired courses, giving input as to when in the semester particular concepts are being taught.
   b) Attending LA&S 101 class to discuss their research, careers in their field, or other opportunities in their departments.
   c) Having dinner with the TLC participants in one of the dining halls (if TLC is residential) for informal conversation.
   d) Planning a field trip to visit “their turf” to see where and how they do their research.

Many freshmen want to get more connected to their intended field of study, so getting to know these professors better, understanding the course expectations, and learning about the opportunities available to them in those fields can be very inspiring.

11. **Partnerships**
Describe any ways that you plan to collaborate with campus offices or support services, such as the KU libraries, Freshman-Sophomore Advising Center, Student Development Center, Multicultural Resource Center, etc.

   **Recommendations**
   - It is highly recommend that the Freshman-Sophomore Advising Center be utilized before enrollment advising to help freshmen navigate the experience of Spring enrollment. An advisor from that office will be happy to visit your class to help them prepare for the process.
• Introducing a cultural aspect of the subjects being studied is encouraged. Suggestions include collaboration with the Multicultural Resource Center, an event at the Lied Center, a campus event celebrating an ethnic culture, etc.

12. Peer Educators (PEs) Recruitment and Selection
PEs are upperclass students who have the desire to help others and believe they can make a difference in the lives of freshmen. They provide academic guidance and support, create opportunities for bonding, co-facilitate the LA&S 101 course, and assist freshmen with their overall adjustment to campus life.

Faculty Facilitators are responsible for the recruitment, selection, and supervision of the PE. (The TLC Coordinator will provide training for the PEs.) The TLC Coordinator can assist in the development of a recruitment and selection process, and can offer suggestions and guidelines for supervision and evaluation of the PE. Selection of a PE needs to occur prior to Spring Break. It may be helpful to select a student from your field of study who has taken at least one of the courses involved in the TLC.

13. PEs for Residential TLCs
Before recruiting a PE for a residential TLC, it will be important to decide if you will require the PE to live with the TLC participants in on-campus housing. Doing so certainly has benefits (see Item #5), but not all upperclass students want to live on-campus, so requiring this can limit the recruitment pool. It should be noted that it can be more challenging for a PE to develop a sense of rapport and regular interaction with TLC participants if s/he is not living along side them. The TLC Coordinator, however, can help you identify means to compensate for this lack of regular interaction if you decide to not require the PE to live in on-campus student housing.

14. PE Supervision and Evaluation
Describe the type of supervisory interaction you plan to have with the PE (i.e. weekly planning sessions, daily contact, weekly lunches) and how you will evaluate the PEs performance (informal/formal feedback, coaching, etc.)

15. TLC Marketing
While TLC brochures are given to students during high school “Senior Day” visits, and admissions staff talk about TLCs when they meet with prospective students, it is important to take advantage of every opportunity to spread the word about the TLCs. Identify any means of contact with incoming freshmen that you or your department can utilize to encourage students to apply for the TLC (e.g. department admissions letter, high school visits, summer camp programs, web site, targeted emails).

16. PE Compensation
The TLC program compensates PEs with a stipend of $3,500 for residential TLCs and $2,190 for TLCs with undesignated housing. The differential is based on the estimation that residential PEs spend at least one-third more time interacting with and mentoring the TLC participants, and they are expected to serve as constant role models for these students with whom they live. The stipend is based on service for the full academic year (when classes are in session), plus one week of training prior to the beginning of classes in the Fall.
Some academic departments may feel the need to supplement this stipend in order to attract quality candidates who may otherwise be drawn to other employment opportunities within their field. For instance, if an upperclass student can be a lab research assistant or a tutor for a higher rate of pay, it may be beneficial to supplement the stipend. If a research assistant position provides valuable experience that a PE candidate wouldn’t want to forego, perhaps you would add some research or lab responsibilities to the PE role and compensate the student at a higher rate. (Please be mindful of the number of hours already involved in a PE role – approximately 12 hours per week for residential TLCs and 8 hours per week for TLCs with undesignated housing.)

17. Learning Outcomes Assessment
“Intentionality” is a critical aspect of the TLC program. Identifying learning outcomes during the planning stages will help ensure the intentionality and purposefulness of this experience for the community. Your outcomes might be based on departmental/college outcome goals, or perhaps based on your own instructional goals. See examples below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intended Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Source of Outcome Goal</th>
<th>Specific TLC Experience Designed to Meet Outcomes</th>
<th>Assessment Methodologies for Intended Outcomes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example</td>
<td>Increase critical thinking and problem-solving skills</td>
<td>General Education Goal #1</td>
<td>• Linked course assignments&lt;br&gt;• Analysis of case studies&lt;br&gt;• Study groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example</td>
<td>Increase collaborative interaction among students, faculty, and staff</td>
<td>TLC Program Goal, and Department goal for improving students’ ability to work together in a team situation</td>
<td>• Clustered courses&lt;br&gt;• Peer Educator&lt;br&gt;• Faculty dinners&lt;br&gt;• Team-building exercises</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18. Coordination of Outcomes Assessment
State who will be responsible for coordinating the outcome assessment for this TLC. Will one or more of the faculty involved have a role in assessment? Will the PE be responsible for any aspects of assessment? Is there any departmental assessment or evaluations that will capture some of the feedback that you need?
19. **Activities or Events**

Thoughtful planning is very important to facilitate TLCs that achieve the intended outcomes. It is helpful to incorporate in the LA&S 101 syllabus the events or activities planned for the semester. This might include field trips, picnics/faculty dinners, Lied Center or other campus events, museum trips, etc. Although the TLC budget is limited, there is some money set aside to assist with TLC programming. It is hoped that departmental commitment to the benefits of the TLC will allow for funding or partial funding of some activities and events. Please list any activities and events that you plan to incorporate into the TLC:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event/Activity</th>
<th>Educational Outcome</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Dept. $ Contribution</th>
<th>Funding amount requested from TLC Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example Kickoff picnic with department faculty</td>
<td>a) Collegiality (students get to know faculty)</td>
<td>$150</td>
<td>$150</td>
<td>- 0 -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Integration into the University community (social)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Example Field trip to KU Med Center and dinner in KC</td>
<td>a) Introduce a variety of careers in Allied Health Field Community bonding</td>
<td>$200</td>
<td>$100</td>
<td>$100</td>
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</tbody>
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20. **Additional Forms of Support**

This is an opportunity to speak to any broader context in which your plans for this TLC are taking place. For example:

- Is this TLC part of a broader recruitment/retention program on behalf of your department? If so, please describe.
- Has your department head, Dean, or other faculty indicated a willingness to become involved in this TLC (attending events, guest lecturing, etc.)?

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