

“In the last two decades, there has been a resurgence of interest in undergraduate education at large research universities (Boyer Commission, 1998, 2002; National Science Foundation, 1996; Ad Hoc Committee, 1987,) ‘Shrinking’ the megaversity to a manageable size for undergraduates, especially first-year students, requires administrative commitment and collaboration between student affairs and academic affairs practitioners. Living-learning programs represent a significant response to, and product of, the broader movement to improve undergraduate teaching and learning through learning communities.”
NSSLP Report, 2007

The Study

Fifty-two (52) colleges and universities participated in the National Study of Living-Learning Programs (NSLLP) in 2007. Michigan State University was one of these schools. In March of 2007, the Department of Residence Life invited approximately 4800 undergraduate students living in residence halls to participate in the NSLLP. This number included all the students living in designated living-learning programs (N=1888) and a comparison group of randomly selected residence hall students not living in a designated living-learning program (N=2933).

A larger number of students not in living-learning programs were invited to participate because students in living-learning programs have historically responded at higher rates. This proved to be accurate for the NSLLP. Twenty-four percent of the students in living-learning programs completed the survey, while non-living-learning students had a response rate of 18%. About 500 students responded from each group.

The response rates for each of the living-learning programs at Michigan State ranged from 11% to 41%. The MSU overall response rate of 22% exceeded the national response rate of 20%. For analysis, the MSU data was weighted by gender, race/ethnicity and academic class level.

Comparisons

The NSLLP provided comparison data for each institution based on institutional characteristics. The comparison group for MSU was “Research University – Very High Research - >10 Living-Learning Programs”. For this SpotLight, this group will be termed “Benchmark Institutions”. Institutions in this group were: Colorado State University, Indiana University, New York University, Ohio State University, University of Arizona, University of California at Irvine, University of Maryland at College Park, University of Missouri at Columbia, and the University of South Carolina.

Selected comments from students in residential living-learning programs

I am in love with MSU, and wake up every day knowing that I made the right decision to come here.



I really enjoy Lyman Briggs; it provides a great sense of security knowing that there are other people in my classes who I can easily find for help. Plus the help hours are really effective.



I thought the Honors floor had a ... different environment than any other floor. However it's not that different. It's still noisy, busy and messy. However, I love my floor.



ROIAL is an amazing experience. It has given me so much.



I hate it here!



The best choice I made, coming into college, was deciding to be a part of James Madison College and the Honors College. Both are mentally and intellectually challenging, and they help me to strongly prepare for my future. They also both offer me many opportunities for campus and community involvement.



I love it.

Entry Characteristics

MSU's students in living-learning programs were found to be different from their non-living-learning cohorts upon entry to the university. The parents of students in living-learning programs had received more education and earned more. The living-learning program students had higher high school GPAs, and higher SAT or ACT scores and were somewhat more politically liberal, and somewhat less religious.

Input-Environment-Outcome College Impact Model

The conceptual framework for the NSLLP is based on Alexander Astin's "Input-Environment-Outcome Model" (IEO). The model demonstrates that the desired outcome (student learning) is influenced by the input characteristics (background, test scores, personal characteristics) and the environment (faculty, peers, classes, activities, living circumstances). In living-learning programs the environment is enriched with a number of programs, services and specialized staff. The question is which program elements are most effective, and positively impact the living and learning experiences of our students.

The desired outcomes of living-learning programs are not uniquely different from the outcomes sought by any stellar residence life program: retention, involvement, engagement, cognitive and social skill development, civic engagement, ethical development, cultural competency, academic achievement, etc.

Living-learning programs, in all their different designs, seek to maximize the opportunities for obtaining positive outcomes through increased attention to collaborative and integrated work by university faculty, staff and students which maximizes the opportunities they inherently have because students live where they learn.

Living-Learning Program Participants

Comparisons were made between all students from participant universities who were in living-learning programs and those who were not in living-learning programs, using the samples provided by each institution. The following information relates to this national comparison. Students in living-learning programs were found to have more frequent discussions with their peers about academic, career and socio-cultural issues. They also had more positive interactions with peers around the area of diversity.

Students in living-learning programs had more interaction with faculty about course materials and more interaction in general. They visited their academic advisors more frequently and they went to class and studied more frequently. The time they spent studying was greater in all venues (studying alone, studying with one other person, studying in the library or other campus facility or with a small group). Additionally, they participated more frequently in community service and less likely to work off-campus.

We truly are a community of brothers and sisters that look out for each other and many of us interact more like family than friends.



The aspect of James Madison that I enjoy the most is the quaintness of the college within the huge university. It has been a perfect fit for me and I am very lucky to have found this wonderful of a program. I can't imagine studying anywhere else right now. Being close to students in the same courses has made studying much more efficient and I believe it has allowed me to grow both academically and socially.



I feel that the perks that are advertised are all fabricated (i.e. great access to advisors and teachers) as I feel I have no greater opportunities than anyone else on campus. I feel I am not a member of a community, and that there is no desire or effort to unify students or make them part of the community. I think that the diversity of non-residential college dorms (i.e. Hubbard Hall) makes the living-learning experience much richer.



Any study that looks intensively at the environment of a residence hall should keep well in mind that the people on a floor are what make the experience great or not. The fanciest services or the most convenient resources amount to little if you can't talk to the people across the hall.

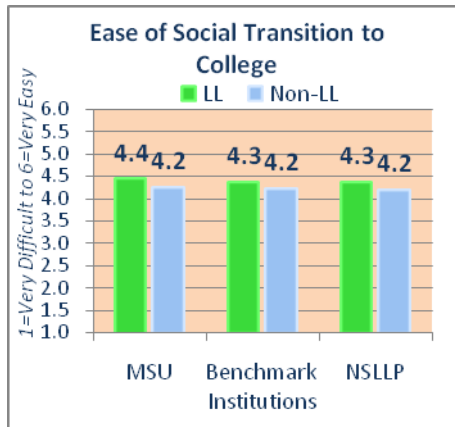
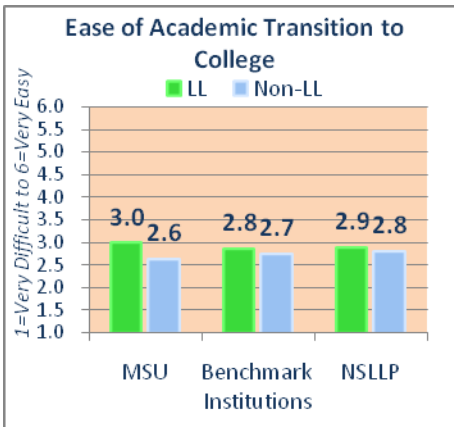
Students in living-learning programs were found to have greater intellectual abilities, a greater sense of civic engagement, and a greater sense of belonging. They were also more confident that they would be successful in college. Significantly more living-learning program students intend to participate in research with a professor, a study abroad program, and independent research. There was no significant difference in their appreciation of diversity.

Overall, students in living-learning programs reported that the residence hall climate was more academically and socially supportive.

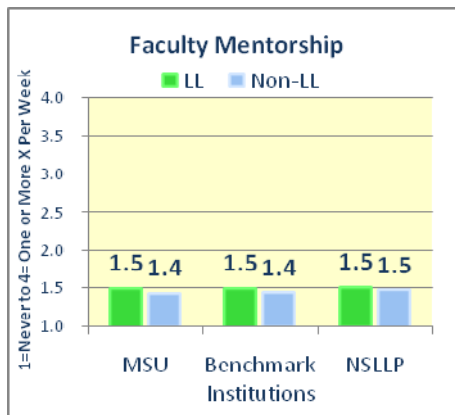
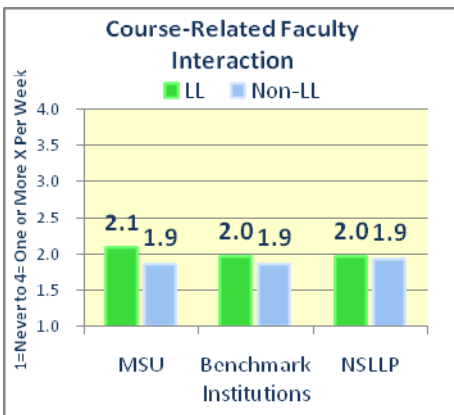
Living Learning Program Factors

The NSLLP developed factors to utilize for the comparison of living-learning program elements. These factors were generated from related questions using Cronbach Alpha reliability testing. The factors selected for review in this SpotLight, and their associated questions, are listed in the sidebars on the next two pages. Charts* featuring the differences between MSU, its comparison “Benchmarking Institutions” and the full survey group visually emphasize the positive nature of MSU’s living-learning experience .

TRANSITION



FACULTY INTERACTION



*Note that scales differ from chart to chart.

NSLLP FACTORS AND THE QUESTIONS RELATED TO EACH FACTOR

Ease with academic transition to college

- Ease with communicating with instructors outside class
- Ease with seeking academic or personal help when needed
- Ease with forming study groups

Ease with social transition to college

- Ease with getting to know other people in residence hall
- Ease with making new friends
- East with getting along with roommate

Course-related faculty interaction

- Visited informally with instructor before/after class
- Made appt to meet instructor in his/her office
- Asked instructor for information related to course
- Worked on research project with instructor

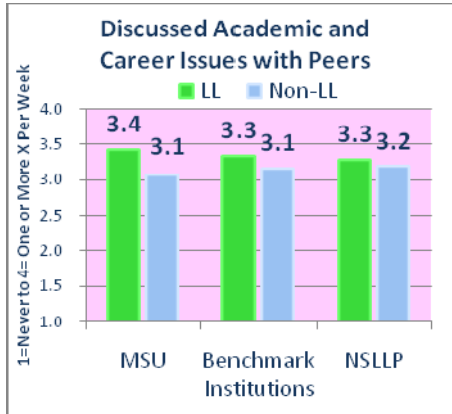
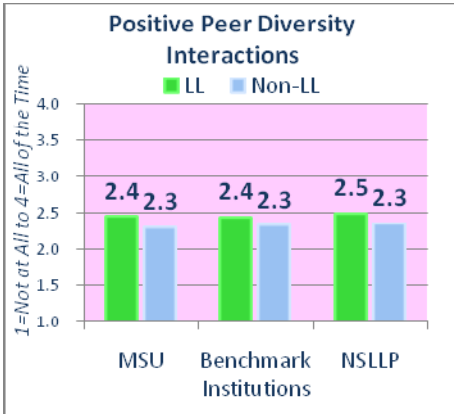
Faculty mentorship

- Discussed personal problems or concerns with instructor
- Discussed career plans & ambitions with instructor
- Visited informally with instructor on social occasion

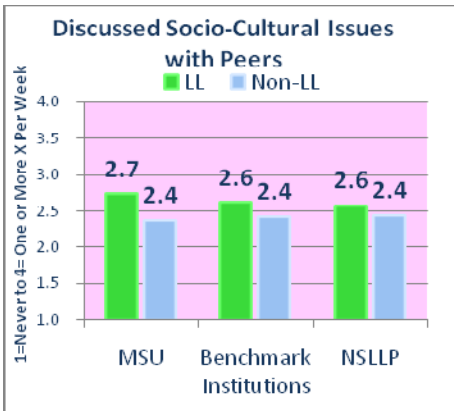
Discussed academic and career issues with peers

- Shared concerns about classes and assignments
- Discussed something learned in class
- Talked about current news events

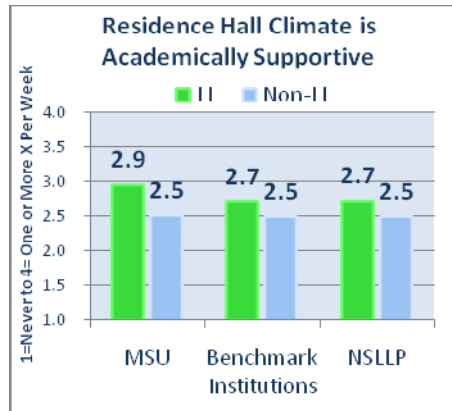
PEER INTERACTION



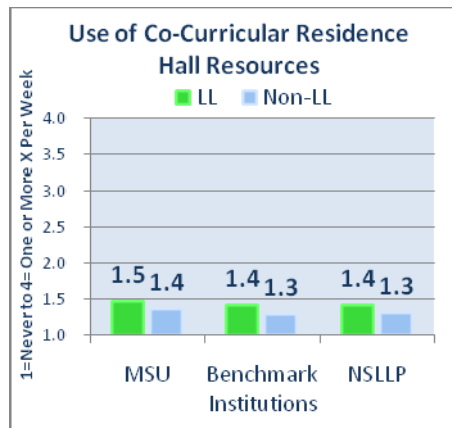
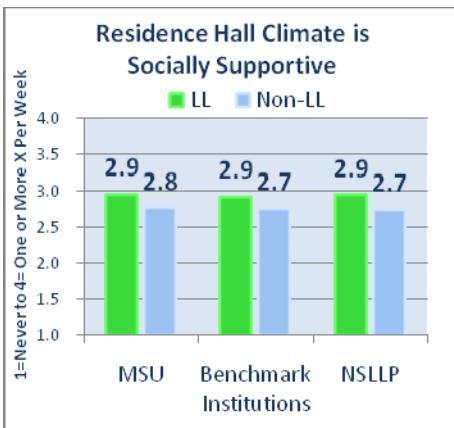
PEER INTERACTION



RESIDENCE HALLS



RESIDENCE HALLS



Discussed socio-cultural issues with peers

- Had discussions with students whose political opinions were very different
- Had discussions with those with different religious beliefs
- Discussed social issues such as peace, human rights, justice
- Discussed views about multiculturalism and diversity
- Had discussions with students whose personal values different

Positive peer diversity interactions

- Had intellectual discussions outside class
- Shared personal feelings & problems
- Shared a meal together
- Attended social events together
- Studied together
- Discussed race relations outside of class

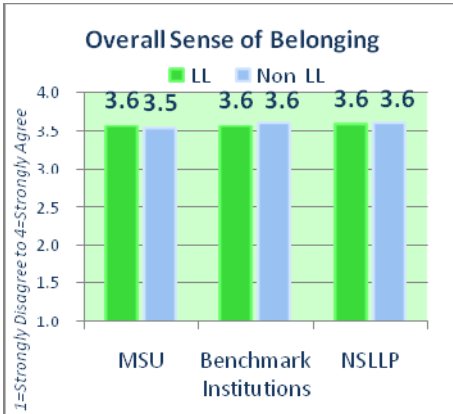
Residence hall climate is academically supportive

- Environment supports academic achievement
- Most students study a lot
- It's easy to form study groups
- Staff help with academics
- each
- Peer academic support

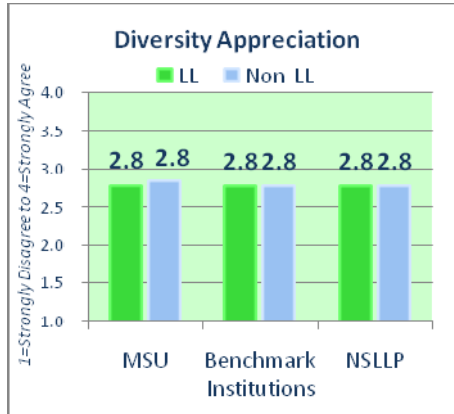
Residence hall climate is socially supportive

- Students help and support one another other
- Students appreciate different religions
- Students live in an Intellectually stimulating environment
- Students appreciate different races/ethnicities
- Students would recommend this residence hall
- Different students interact with each other

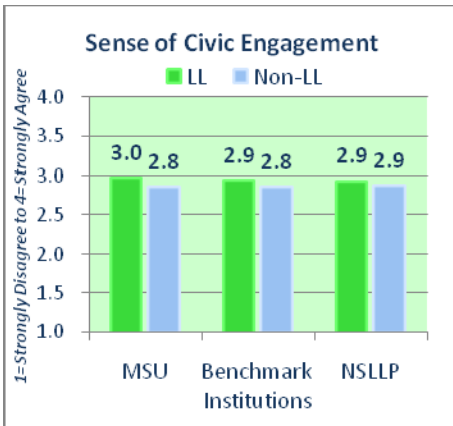
BELONGING



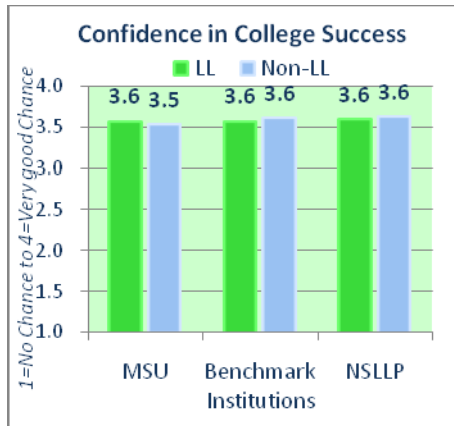
DIVERSITY



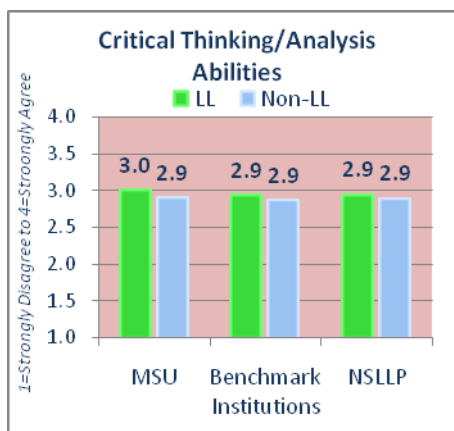
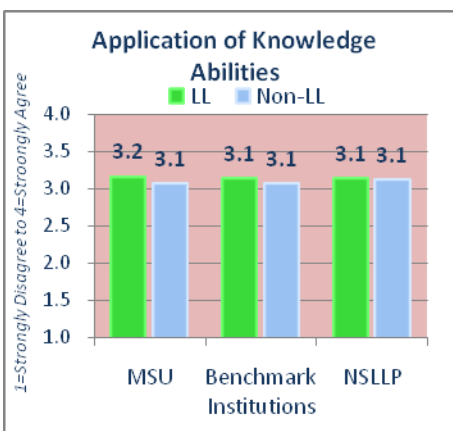
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT



CONFIDENCE



INTELLECTUAL ABILITIES



Use co-curricular residence hall resources

- Career workshops
- Community service projects
- Peer study groups
- Peer counselors

Overall sense of belonging

- I feel a sense of belonging
- I feel like a member of the on campus community
- I would choose the same college over again
- I feel comfortable on campus

Diversity appreciation

- Learning about other groups
- Awareness of complexities of intergroup interaction
- Have a greater commitment to my own identity

Sense of civic engagement

- Work with others to make the community a better place
- Volunteer time to community
- Believe my work has greater purpose for larger community
- Important that I play active role in community

Confidence in college success

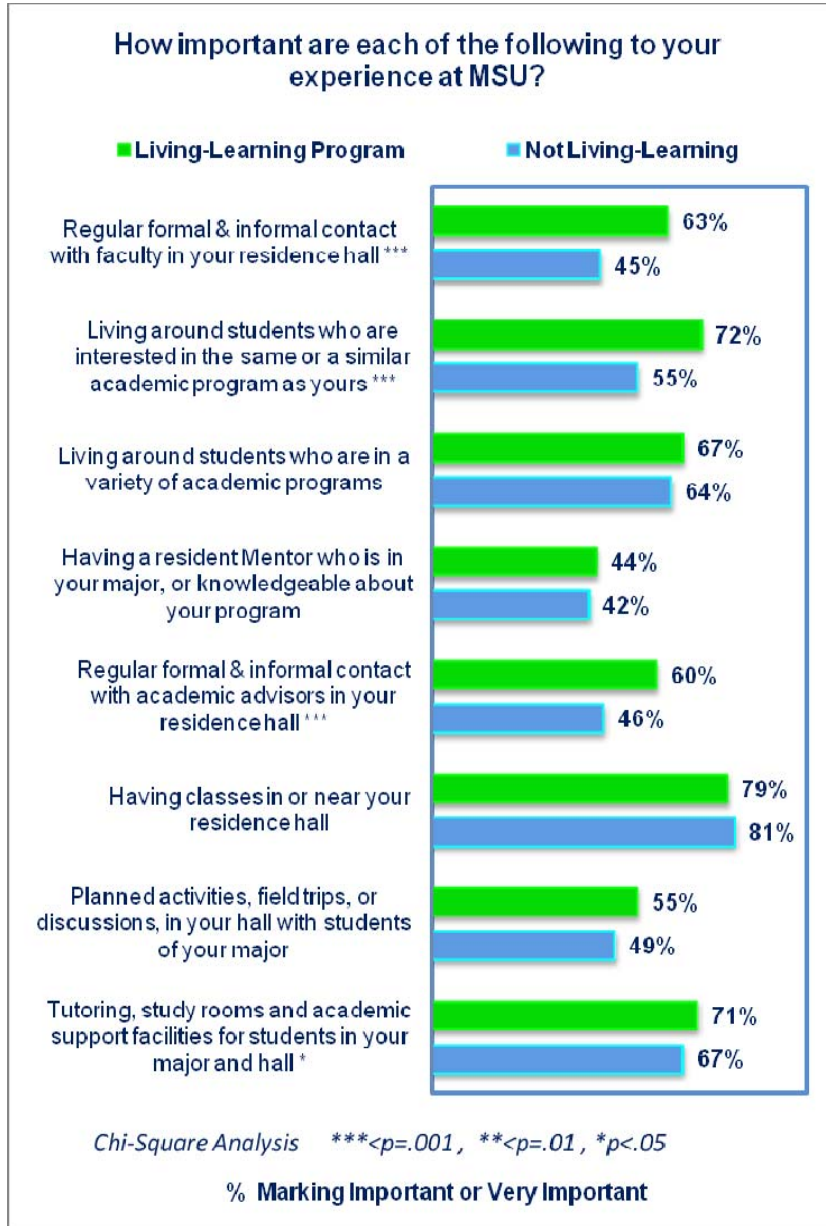
- Do well academically
- Make at least a B average
- Complete my degree
- Complete my degree on time
- Be admitted to graduate school
- Graduate with honors

Critical thinking/analysis abilities

- Explore meaning of facts when introduced to new ideas
- Enjoy discussing issues with people who disagree with me
- Have disagreed with an author/ book/article I was reading
- Challenged profs statements before accepting as right
- Developed own opinions by analyzing +/- of different points

Michigan State University Living-Learning Programs

Michigan State University added several questions to the standard survey. Several elements of present, or potential, living-learning programs were rated by comparison groups of students living in a designated living-learning program and students not in a living-learning program in order to assess the value of these programs, facilities, faculty or staff. Significant differences are noted.



Students in living-learning programs rated all but one of the living-learning elements measured higher than non-living learning program students. Not surprisingly, all students would like to have classes in or near their residence halls; students not in living-learning programs even more than those in such programs. It is important though, to note the level of interest of all students in having these services, programs and staff in their living environments. Bringing learning home to all MSU students is the challenge faculty, staff and students should take.

Application of knowledge abilities

- *Something learned in one class helped to learn in another*
- *Applied course materials to other areas of life*
- *Discovering new ways to understand motivates me*
- *Had discussions with other students about class ideas/topics*
- *Became excited about field/major as a result of course*

Weighted Responses by MSU Living-Learning Programs *

Program	Surveys	
	Program Participants	Surveys Utilized
Lyman Briggs	917	199
James Madison	446	99
ROSES	107	15
ROIAL	58	18
Eli Broad Business	49	11
RISE	42	8
Honors College	273	111
Total – Any L/L Program	1818	451
Total – No Program	2933	528

*0*Responses were weighted in order to preserve the proportional representation of each living-learning program in the overall living-learning MSU sample*

Students in both Honors College and another formal living-learning program were included in the formal living-learning program number only

Students were included only if they lived in a designated living-learning community