



Georgia Gwinnett
COLLEGE

Building and Maintaining Communities: GGC Learning Communities

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LEARNING COMMUNITIES...A FEW QUOTES

- “The key goals for learning communities are to encourage integration of learning across courses and to involve students with 'big questions' that matter beyond the classroom” (Kuh, O’Donnell, & Reed 2013).
- “Learning community participation offers concrete results partially because it links active learning to the development of community with peers and with professors” (Goodlad, Westengard & Hillstrom 2018).
- “Through two or more linked courses, learning communities provide opportunities for students to connect with each other as well as with faculty and to deeply examine what they are learning in their classrooms” (Kranzow & Foote 2018).

LEARNING COMMUNITIES IN PRACTICE

- Classes linked but not locked
 - Typically based on linked courses and exploration across disciplines (Kuh, O'Donnell, & Geary Schneider 2017)
- Faculty encouraged to coordinate
- Co-curricular activities (integrative learning opportunities) by Focus Area
- Important to keep in mind: "...when done well" (Kuh 2008; Kuh, O'Donnell, & Reed 2013).



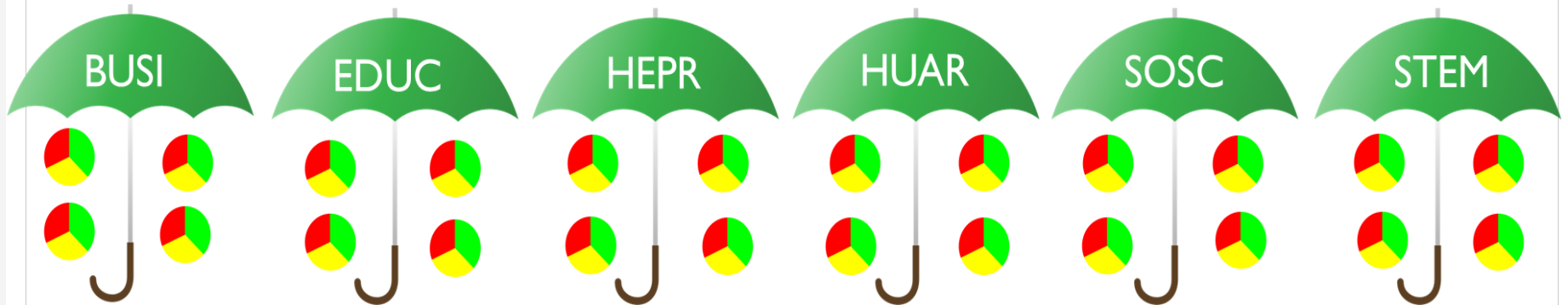
LEARNING COMMUNITIES IN PRACTICE

- Support the first-year transition (Mach, et al. 2018)
 - **LIFT** (Launching and Inspiring your First-year Transition)
 - **Grizzly First** (First Gen) LCs at GGC
- Support for sophomores (Kranzow & Foote 2018)
 - **RISE** (Re-Imagining your Sophomore Experience) at GGC
- May be thematic, interest-based (Halper, Lubinger, & Greisberger 2020)
 - **HACER** Learning Community at GGC

GGC LEARNING COMMUNITY OUTCOMES

1. Students enrolled in learning communities will demonstrate a growth in productive academic mindset.
2. Students in the learning communities can explain specific ways in which their academic interests and career goals either align or do not align with their academic focus area.
3. Through reflection on an integrative learning experience, students in LCs show development in: engaging new and diverse situations, expressing themselves flexibly, connecting knowledge and experience creatively, and deepening self-understanding.

LEARNING COMMUNITIES AND FOCUS AREAS



9 credit FYLC “triad” (3 classes) + 6 credits of other relevant courses for focus area = 15 credits for full-time students

SCALING LEARNING COMMUNITIES AT GGC

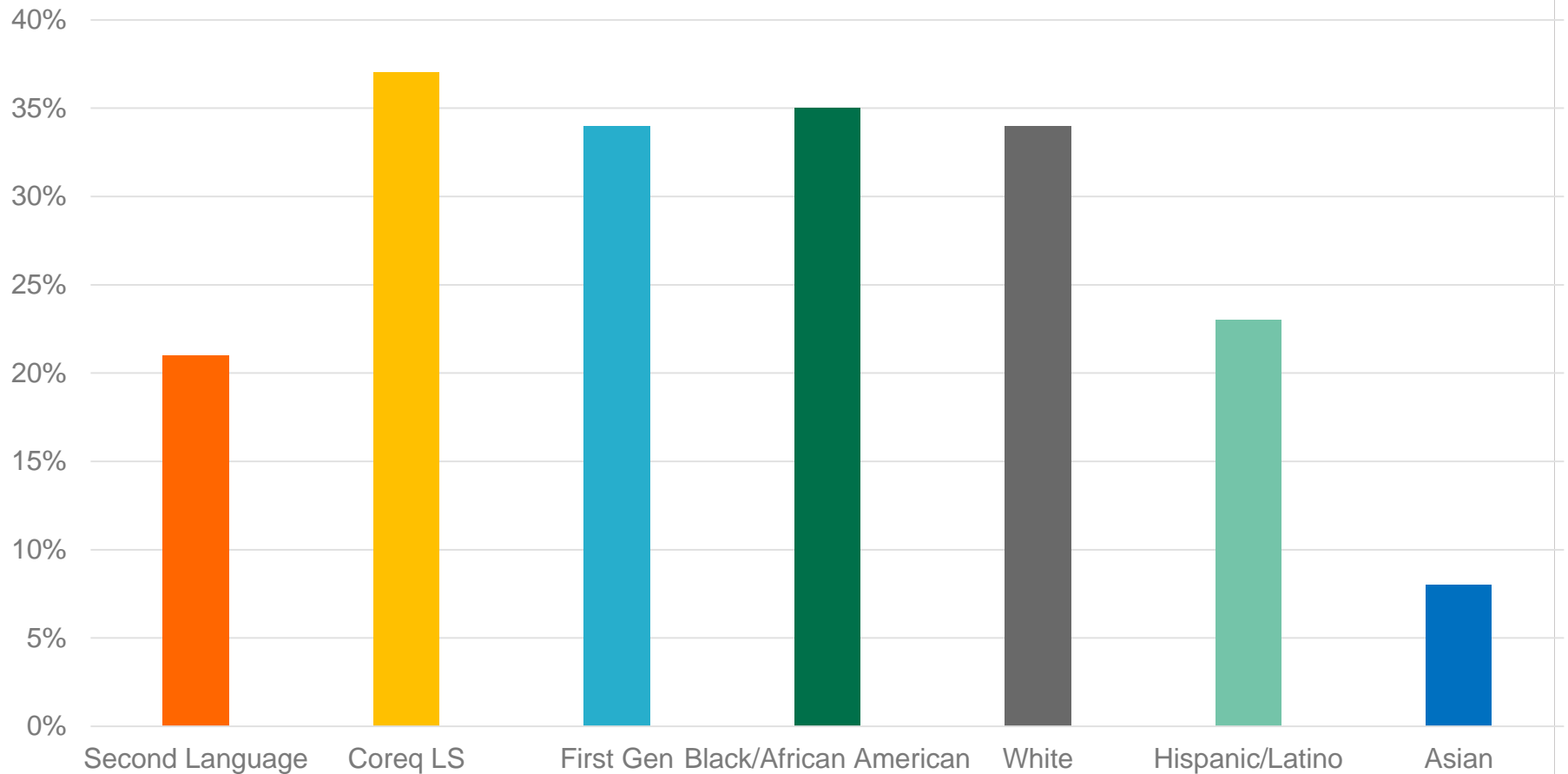
Target: 70% of incoming class in a LC experience

Semester	LCs	Students*	Note
Fall 2017	6	75	Pilot semester
Fall 2018	13	181	LCs expanded, with 3 First Gen LCs
Fall 2019	124	2678	Large scaling of LCs
Fall 2020	107	2773	Maintain scale; 15 LCs include FYS

* Data snapshot: Scaling of first-year LCs is highlighted, drawing partly on transactional data for total students in any LC section. Snapshots intended to inform decision-making to improve student recruitment, retention, and graduation.

LEARNING COMMUNITY EQUITY FALL 2019

Of students in 100% of their LC sections*



*Data snapshot: Drawing partly on transactional data at a point in time.

MOMENTUM APPROACH AND LEARNING COMMUNITIES



Momentum Element	LC Activity or Aspect
Deepen purposeful choices	LC courses linked to students' Focus Area/major or career interest
Cultivate productive academic mindsets	Social belonging aspects of LC cohorts; many LCs (e.g., First Gen) include FYS section
Maintain full momentum along a clear pathway	Integrative learning activity linked to the LC Focus Area
Heighten academic engagement	High-Impact Practice (HIP) for deeper learning among students from diverse backgrounds (e.g., Kuh/AAC&U, 2008)
Complete critical milestones	Faculty/staff communication across LC sections to support student progress

WHAT WE LEARNED FALL 19 – FALL 20

- Structural intervention may be insufficient for impact on **positive academic mindset** (Mindset survey results).
- Need for additional **integrative learning** opportunities.
- Enhancing **LC faculty communication** is key.
- Opportunity for increased learning communities in **semester 2, second year, and beyond**.
- Need for residential component: **Living-learning communities (LLCs)**.
- Integrating LCs with other **HIPs: FYS, ePortfolio, undergraduate research, others** could multiply the effects of each practice.

Orientation

- Focus Area Pods
- Focus Area Wristbands
- GGC Lexicon

First Year Seminar

- Campus Partnerships
- Campus Discovery Project



Grizzly First Scholars Learning Community

- First Gen Meet and Greet
- Peer Mentoring
- Service Learning
- Symposium



NEXT STEPS

Suggested by data and experience...

- Further disaggregate data on LC student success.
- Foster LCs in semester 2, second year, and beyond; link with Student Success Pathways: *LIFT, RISE, JUMP, SOAR*.
- Integrate HIPs in LCs.
- Establish Living-Learning Communities (LLCs), such as *HACER*.
- Provide more training and design opportunities.
- Enhance communication within/across LCs.

