JCAPS

A STUDY OF A LIVING LEARNING COMMUNITY PROGRAM IN A MIDWEST UNIVERSITY: THROUGH A SENSEMAKING LENS

Jean A Patterson, Wichita State University
Chelsea Redger-Marquardt, Wichita State University

Using a qualitative case study approach informed by sensemaking and sensegiving theories, student program leaders, and Living Learning Community (LLC) coordinators' perceptions of an LLC program in a first-year student residence hall at a mid-sized public university are presented. LLCs are staffed by a dedicated live-in student program leader and supported by an LLC coordinator connected to the academic college or student affairs department which serves as the LLC's thematic element. Findings indicated student program leaders had a strong sense of identity and purpose while LLC coordinators struggled to fully understand their role within the overall Housing and Residence Life (HRL) framework. Both groups shared frustration with logistical issues, lack of resident engagement and accountability, and communication. LLC programs could benefit from stronger coupling with LLC coordinator's home colleges or departments, clearly defined roles and expectations, and consistent multi-directional communication.

Introduction

Housing, meals, and custodial services were once the main priorities for university housing standards. Today, residence halls no longer simply provide housing, they are measures to enhance and monitor student social and learning experiences (Whitcher-Skinner et al., 2017). Residence halls are now viewed as integral to students' university experience. In other words, "these spaces function as communities that advance scholarship and character among their members" (Whitcher-Skinner et al., p. 1). Residence life has a critical role to play in not only determining overall student satisfaction, but with their social integration, academic success, and eventual degree completion.

A renewed focus on residence life can be seen in the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U, 2023) eleven standards known as high impact practices (HIPs). HIPs are curricular and co-curricular structures that employ high quality pedagogies and practices; they are widely tested teaching and learning practices with demonstrated benefits for college students. Learning communities are one example of a HIP, others include first-year seminars, capstone courses, internships, diversity and global learning, ePortfolios, and service-learning. Learning communities encourage students to more deeply examine the themes and concepts related to the subject matter they are studying (Inkelas & Soldner, 2011; Kuh, 2008). Learning communities can take different forms, but as a curriculum structure, students with common attributes, interests, or majors generally take two or more linked courses together as a group (Tinto, 2003).

Patterson, J. A., & Redger-Marquardt, C. (2025). A study of a living learning community program in a midwest university: Through a sensemaking lens. Journal of Campus Activities Practice and Scholarship, 7(1), 58-72. https://doi.org/10.52499/2024018

As a subset of the high impact practice of Learning Communities, residential Living Learning Communities (LLCs) have become a popular option to increase student retention and satisfaction (Bonet & Walters, 2016; Brower & Inkelas, 2010). LLCs are intentional groupings of students living together in a residence hall with shared academic and/or non-academic interests (Brower & Inkelas, 2010; Inkelas & Weisman, 2003; Luna & Gahagan, 2008). Most, but not all, LLCs focus on students in their first year of college, and they have benefited students who are most at risk of not completing, such as first generation, underrepresented minorities, and academically underprepared students (Inkelas et al., 2007). Documented positive student outcomes are higher GPA and overall increased academic achievement, elevated academic self-confidence, and a smoother transition to college (Brower & Inkelas, 2010; Caviglia-Harris, 2022; Inkelas et al., 2018; Stassen, 2003).

LLCs have three things in common intended to facilitate social interactions and assist in the transition to college life: (a) curriculum experiences, (b) social and intellectual engagement, and (c) shared responsibilities (Tinto, 2003). Constructing a curriculum experience is intended to promote shared knowledge among the learners. Involving students in social and intellectual programs allows them to get to know each other and bond. Shared responsibility leads to students becoming mutually dependent. Adding "living" to the learning communities allows students to combine housing with shared learning. Engagement is facilitated with ongoing interactions when students live in created communities with a shared content or thematic focus (Zhao & Kuh, 2004).

LLCs are commonly staffed with full-time university personnel who provide administrative oversight and supervise the student program leader who lives with and plans activities for the student members (Inkelas & Weisman, 2003). The many different forms, goals, and unrestricting design of LLCs give HRL professional staff the ability to tailor them specifically for their school (Wawrzynski & Jessup-Anger, 2010). However, despite their popularity and flexible options, LLCs can be too loosely designed with ambiguous goals and abstract purposes (Dunn & Dean, 2013). Thus, the strength of the LLC design, its flexibility and adaptability for the specific university context, can make implementation complex and challenging. Without intentional plans or full commitment and involvement from faculty and staff, authentic implementation may be difficult to achieve (Frazier & Eighmy, 2012). Furthermore, lacking a clearly defined or understood framework, LLCs may not produce the desired results university HRL personnel intend. An LLC with clearly defined program components and goals is more likely to result in successful student outcomes (Wawrzynski & Jessup-Anger, 2010). Moreover, much of the extant research focuses on the student experience and academic outcomes as well as normative expectations for how the LLC should function. Yet, how LLCs are structured and operate in practice has not been fully examined.

Our objectives are to (a) present findings from a qualitative case study of the implementation of LLCs in a residence hall at a mid-sized public university, (b) demonstrate how sensemaking and sensegiving theories were used to inform the findings, and (c) provide evidence-based research that can assist HRL practitioners who wish to implement and/or refine their university LLC programs. The overarching research question was how do LLC staff coordinators and student program leaders make sense of the LLC program?

Theoretical Framework: Sensemaking and Sensegiving

Sensemaking and sensegiving were used as a lens for interpreting how LLC coordinators and student program leaders expressed their perspectives about the practices of the LLC program at one university. Sensemaking is a well-established organizational theory that has been used to understand the social construction of education and other organizations (Astuto & Clark, 1986; Weick, 1979, 1995, 2001). Sensegiving occurs through the direction and cues provided by HRL leadership. Sensemaking involves the LLC coordinators and student program leaders continually placing their experience and practice within a frame of reference.

Weick (1995) illustrated sensemaking as being comprised of seven properties. *Identity construction* describes how people perceive themselves in their organization. Sensemaking is always *retrospective*, that is, individuals are looking back to make sense of what occurred. *Enactive of sensible environments* is the process of translating knowledge to actions. Sensemaking expresses an *ongoing* and *social process* whereby people continuously communicate and discuss ideas and thoughts, both individually and collectively. *Extraction of cues* assists organizational participants in deciding what information they should pay attention to and where to focus. Sensemaking is driven by *plausibility rather than accuracy***.** In other words, sensemaking "is not about truth and getting it right," (Weick et al., 2005, p. 415). Instead, it is about the continued telling of an emerging story so that it becomes more elaborate and convincing and therefore more difficult to criticize. The sensemaking process assists members with addressing uncertainty and ambiguity in their environment. Organizational changes often create sensemaking opportunities that drive organizational leaders and member expectations (Maitlis, 2005), which in this study was the introduction of LLCs to one of the residence halls.

Maitlis (2005) articulated a microanalysis of the sensemaking process and identified four critical forms that shape the characteristics of leaders and stakeholders' sensegiving. *Guided sensemaking* occurs when the level of sensegiving of leaders and stakeholders is high, meaning the sensemaking process was controlled and animated. Highly controlled sensegiving occurs in an organized, systematic fashion, with processes dominated by scheduled meetings, formal committees, and planned events. Leaders use their formal authority to organize occasions for sensegiving whereby issues are discussed through formal channels. Highly animated sensegiving occurs among stakeholders when there is an intense flow of information and stakeholders are actively engaged in shaping interpretations of events and issues. The outcomes of guided sensemaking are rich accounts and emerging consistent actions as leaders and stakeholders collectively make sense of the initiative.

When the process of sensemaking is animated but not controlled, the second form, *fragmented sensemaking***,** is produced. In the absence of controlled sensegiving, stakeholders are left to their own devices to make meaning of the initiative, which results in multiple narrow accounts and emergent series of inconsistent actions. Organizational sensemaking is *restricted* when the process of sensemaking is controlled and not animated. In this form of sensemaking, the result is a single, narrow understanding of the initiative, which then becomes difficult to change because stakeholders' understanding is so proscribed. The restricted form of sensemaking also limits outcomes to a planned set of actions. The last form is *minimal sensemaking*, which is shaped when the process of sensemaking is neither controlled nor animated. This form is associated with low levels of sensegiving from both leaders and stakeholders, who each wait on the other's

interpretation of the initiative. Figure 1 contains a graphic depiction of the four critical forms of sensemaking.

Figure 1
Maitlis' Four Forms of Organizational Sensemaking

High Leader Sensegiving	*Guided Organizational Sensemaking* Process Characteristics ● High animation ● High Control Outcomes ● Unitary, rich account ● Emergent series of consistent actions	*Restricted Organizational Sensemaking* Process Characteristics ● Low animation ● High Control Outcomes ● Unitary, narrow account ● One-time action or planned set of consistent actions
Low Leader Sensegiving	*Fragmented Organizational Sensemaking* Process Characteristics ● High animation ● Low Control Outcomes ● Multiple, narrow accounts ● Emergent series of inconsistent actions	*Minimal Organizational Sensemaking* Process Characteristics ● Low animation ● Low Control Outcomes ● Nominal account ● One-time, compromise action
	High Stakeholder Sensegiving	*Low Stakeholder Sensegiving*

NOTE: Adapted from Maitlis, S. (2005). The social processes of organizational sensemaking. *Academy of Management, 48*(1), 21-49. https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2005.15993111

Framing the study with the sensemaking and sensegiving process helped us to understand and interpret how LLC coordinators and student program leaders made sense of their decisions, what factors influenced sensemaking, and how the findings could be used to further the strategic goals of the program (Degn, 2015).

Methodology

A qualitative case study design was employed to conduct the study, which took place during the 2017-18 academic year (Merriam, 2010; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Merriam defines a qualitative case study as an in-depth analysis of a bounded system which serves as the unit of analysis. In this

study, the bounded system was the LLC program at one mid-sized, Midwest university. At the time of the study, HRL professional staff was offering ten LLCs serving 300 first year students and were housed in the university's newly constructed residence hall. Seven LLCs were associated with academic colleges: Business, Education, Engineering, Women in Engineering, Health Professions, Honors, and Fine Arts. Three LLCs were affiliated with campus departments: Career Ready with the Office of Career Development, Recreation and Wellness with Campus Recreation, and Social Justice with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. Data consisted of individual interviews and documents.

Through the process of purposeful sampling (Patton, 2014), we invited all 19 of the university professional staff LLC coordinators and student program leaders to participate in an interview, which allowed for an in-depth understanding of their perspectives. A total of 16 individuals participated in a personal interview, including all nine professional staff LLC coordinators who are housed in the sponsoring academic college or department and responsible for building the connection between the college/department and HRL. Seven of the 10 student program leaders also participated in an interview. Student program leaders served in RA-like roles with direct responsibility for LLC programming. They lived on the residence hall floors and were charged with building community, providing academic support and resources, and planning and implementing LLC specific programs. To ensure confidentiality, participants' names have been replaced with pseudonyms, which are included in Table 1.

Table 1
LLC Coordinator and Student Program Leader Pseudonyms

LLC Coordinator	Student Program Leader
Maria	Zachary
Camille	Ashley
Ava	Kristin
Beth	David
Joanne	Grace
Katrina	Sophie
Tracy	Sarah
Melinda	
Kevin	

Each interview took 45-60 minutes, was audio-recorded, and then transcribed verbatim to ensure accurate data. After transcription, the data were unitized by reading and breaking them down into smaller segments and entered into an Excel spreadsheet for the purpose of identifying codes and eventual themes (Meyer & Avery, 2009). Study data were then examined continually to facilitate analysis using the constant comparative method (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The systematic process of document analysis started with identifying and finding documents relevant to the study, which included student handbooks, position descriptions, marketing materials, and program assessment materials. All data gathered from the documents were

compared with interview transcripts and used to confirm or identify additional categories. The constant comparative method was used to integrate data from document sources and the interviews in order to identify study findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

By selecting a qualitative case study design, the research methods used to collect, analyze, make meaning of the data, and to present the data were informed by the use of established qualitative case study practices (Lapan et al., 2012; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The methodology of the overall research design embedded strategies which include clearly outlined, systematic and consistent data collection and analysis procedures and the disclosure of researcher positionality. Furthermore, IRB approval was granted for this study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) outlined a framework of credibility, dependability, and transferability to ensure the trustworthiness of a study. This framework served as a standard for this study.

Credibility establishes the truth value or veracity of a study. Triangulation was one technique used in which different data sources and types were compared such as official websites, documents, and participants' interviews (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Another technique used was member checking, which involved sending an individual transcript of interviews to each participant for their review, clarification, and to confirm the content of the transcript. Additionally, the LLC Coordinators and student program leaders were provided a summary of findings specific to their group for their review.

Dependability establishes the consistency of a study. We established an audit trail via the use of interview protocols and transcripts, document and artifact review protocols and an archive of documents reviewed, and finally a log of emails and other communication. We also compared the established findings back to the raw data to ensure the confirmability of the data collected throughout the audit trail. This allowed us to confirm the data were linked and useful, that is, the data were connected to the methodological procedures and evident to the raw data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Transferability ensures the study is applicable to other settings via thick, rich description of the phenomenon. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that for transferability to be achieved a study must first establish its credibility and dependability, as outlined above. It is then up to the reader to determine how the descriptive data might be used to inform their practice. The implications provided can also aid the reader in determining transferability (Creswell, 2015; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

In qualitative research, the author becomes the primary instrument for data collection, thus it is important to identify our positionality so the reader can understand the influences we brought to the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Both authors work in higher education, lived in shared housing during their college experience, including one year in a residence hall and in off-campus shared housing (sorority chapter house). The second author is a former LLC coordinator. Neither author serves in the capacity of the HRL department, however we were invited to conduct the study by HRL administration. Throughout the study we took steps to minimize our positionality with the goal of maintaining neutrality which helped to ensure the trustworthiness of the study.

Findings: Implementing LLCs

Putting the idea of LLCs into practice at the university has been fraught with both good efforts and complications related to how the LLCs are organized and structured. What was working along with issues and concerns participants identified when it came to implementing LLCs were often related to the roles and responsibilities of the people involved. These included the HRL staff, LLC coordinators, and student program leaders. Other issues raised that either facilitated or made implementation of LLCs difficult were the reporting structure and logistical issues. Each of these will be discussed in this section, with direct quotes from participants supporting the theme.

Student Program Leader and LLC Coordinator Roles and Responsibilities

Student program leader and LLC coordinator roles and relationships are critical to the successful implementation of the LLC. In this section, we talk about the how the individuals in these positions described their roles and responsibilities. Student program leaders clearly articulated their roles and responsibilities whereas the LLC coordinators were less clear regarding the understanding of their roles. The reporting structure was complicated and messy with student program leaders directly reporting to HRL but also required to closely collaborate with LLC coordinators who reported to their individual colleges or departments.

Student Program Leader Roles and Responsibilities

Student program leader job descriptions outlined in their Handbook were consistent with what students in those roles shared with us. Student program leaders also received three weeks of intensive training prior to assuming their duties, which further cemented their shared understanding. Student program leader roles and responsibilities came across clearly and consistently throughout the interviews. Common themes about their roles were building community, planning programming, and connecting residents with campus services and resources. For example, when asked what the job entails, student program leader David shared, “My main job description is programming and community building for the special interest group of the LLC.” Grace explained that she was repeatedly reminded, “your job is about community building.” Kristin described her role in these terms, that is, to plan “educational programs and social programs” and “making sure students are getting the resources that they need.” Zachary extended his definition further sharing, “I make sure that the students in the LLC are succeeding academically, they’re making connections in the engineering field, whether that be with other students or faculty or with outside connections within the engineering field.” This commonality in definition of roles and responsibilities was further supported in documents provided by HRL and LLC coordinators as they describe their roles in the next section.

LLC Coordinator Roles and Responsibilities

While documents provided by HRL professional staff included descriptions of the LLC coordinator role and responsibilities, it was not clear when these documents were created, whether they were ever distributed, or if LLC coordinators were aware of them. During interviews, LLC coordinators generally expressed being unsure about what it meant to be a “coordinator” and were unclear as to the parameters of their actual responsibilities. Most indicated being given little guidance about what the role would comprise. When asked what she was told about the role, LLC coordinator Ava responded, “At first not much, not much at all.” Nonetheless, most coordinators saw their role as working with the student program leaders and providing support as needed. David’s response was typical, “I'm the staff advisor… Just to really, just keep things in check and

make sure things are going well with the program." Katrina made a similar comment, "I just see myself as a person who they (student program leader) can turn to ask questions and ask for resources." Kevin shared, "I'm going to be more like a supervisor to our (student program leader), just to make sure that everything's going smoothy, going correctly just to make sure events, you know events are being planned." As will be seen in the next section, most LLC coordinators depended on the student program leaders to execute the planned programming.

LLC Coordinators as Advisors and Student Program Leaders as Executors

What became clear from both LLC coordinators and student program leaders is they saw the coordinators in an advisory-type role, and the student program leaders as the executors of the programs. This meant the student program leaders were given the major responsibilities for community building, student relationships, and engagement. As Melinda explained, "So my role as the coordinator really is to work with the student program leader," because "the student lives on the floor, he is the leader of those students." David made a similar observation, "The student program leader … should be the main person who's going to be in charge of the programming aspect, planning educational events. … And she's also going to be primarily involved with just interacting with the residents." LLC coordinators consistently shared they did not feel they were truly the coordinator, that the student program leader took on that role. The confusion about roles seemed to be exacerbated to some degree by having the people in each role report to different departments, which is explored in the next section.

Complicated Reporting Structure

The reporting structure among the individuals involved with supporting the LLCs was complicated and at times confusing. While the LLC coordinators reported to their academic colleges or departments, the student program leaders indicated they reported directly to HRL staff. They were hired and directly supervised by HRL professional staff. When asked who they go to if they have questions or concerns, student program leader Ashley responded:

> Really just my [HRL] supervisors. We have weekly one-on-ones with our boss so either you could like tell them everything there or you could just like call them. We always have like a pro staff person on duty if there's something we need to talk about.

The students seemed to agree overall that they reported to HRL staff insofar as job performance and for questions or concerns, although they met and made programming plans with their LLC coordinators.

While most student program leaders agreed on their working relationship and chain of command with each other, differences arose about who had the final say in LLC decisions. When asked about reporting procedures regarding communication, LLC coordinator Camille said, "It's depending on what the question and concern is. My experience with Housing in the past has been very messy. And the communication has not been the best." Ava summed it up best regarding the confusion around who the student program leader should communicate with regarding the LLC's activities, "There was a lot of miscommunication. … Our meetings were getting moved around all of the time… So there wasn't a good chain of command for that process… I think [student program leader] was getting instructions from too many people." Nevertheless, most LLC coordinators had limited communications with HRL professional staff, and the student program leaders were often put in the position of the go-between. The LLC coordinators then turned to their fellow coordinators or to their academic college or departments for information and clarification.

The LLC coordinators and student program leaders were expected to meet at least once a month to plan educational activities and social events. Beyond this required minimum meeting, LLC coordinators at times found it difficult to effectively communicate with their student program leader. LLC coordinator Joanne shared that her student program leader was "not particularly responsive to email." Joanne explained she emailed the student program leader, and "I have heard nothing. And that's not the first time that we have struggled a little bit in terms of that kind of thing." Effective communication did happen, however, as reported by the LLC coordinators. The most positive experience in communicating with each other seemed to happen when all interested parties could come together on a regular basis to discuss the day-to-day happenings of the LLC and plan future events.

Encountering Logistical Issues

Any time a new service is implemented in an organization, logistics will play a part. The LLC program at this university is no exception. In our data, we discovered issues involving the selection process of both students and student program leaders, LCC student expectations and accountability, and scheduling conflicts that interfered with LLC implementation. These issues are often behind the scenes but are nonetheless important to the successful implementation of an LLC program.

Selection Processes

For the LLC program to be created on a given campus, several people are identified to accomplish different tasks. Selections included coordinators for each LLC who represent their college or department, student program leaders, and student residents in the LLC through room selection process. Some logistical problems arose around these selection processes.

LLC coordinators were often "voluntold" about their participation in LLCs, that is, the responsibility for coordinating the LLC was added to an already long list of duties. Whereas the student program leaders had to apply for their positions and then were interviewed by HRL staff before being hired. Often, the LLC coordinator was not an integral part of the entire interview process and did not have a say in making the final decision in the hiring of their student program leader. For example, LLC coordinator Camille explained,

> I would say a very big frustration for probably all of the coordinators … is that we've asked over and over to be involved in that selection process because we're the ones who have to work with them to make this work. … Because not having that input in the final decision is just like "well why was I even involved in the process in the first place?" It's kind of like "well, you guys just wasted our time."

The lack of being involved consistently and not having any real input into hiring their student program leader were issues brought up by multiple LLC coordinators. None of the student program leaders mentioned any issues with the selection process into their positions.

LLC Student Selection and Room Assignment

Another logistical issue centered around how the students were chosen to be part of the LLC and assigning rooms to them. Many research participants indicated a frustration in students applying for LLCs for the sole purpose of obtaining desirable housing assignments in the new residence hall. Students in LLCs are given first choice in the room selection process, thereby ensuring they

get what they deem as the "good rooms." For example, coordinator Joanne said, "What I found out later was that some of them chose to be part of this LLC because they wanted housing space in [new residence hall] and so it was not a motive to be part of the LLC." This belief was also supported by coordinator Maria who said, "I would say at least three-quarters of our community selected the LLC because of the room and not because of the community."

Along with the room selection issue is the question of how the LLCs were marketed to the students. Maria went on to share, "I wouldn't say they know what they're signing up for, honestly. A lot of our parents signed them up for it." Desirable housing options are a serious consideration when applying to colleges. Many students were signing up for LLCs simply for the first choice in room assignments, which led to their minimal engagement in the LLC's programming.

LLC Student Expectations and Accountability

Because many students chose the LLC for reasons other than a desire to be part of a living learning community, they minimally participated in LLC programming. LLC coordinators and student program leaders expected that students should desire to participate in LLC events and activities since they signed up for the LLC. Nonetheless, students did not feel obligated to participate in anything LLC-related even after signing up. This created stress and frustration for those charged with implementing the LLC programming. Student program leader Sophie shared, "Participation on my floor is a challenge. It's not fully there." LLC coordinator Katrina further lamented, "I just want to show them that there are resources here on campus. so, you know, all I really would want them to do is just to show up."

Residents' unwillingness to fully participate in the LLC was attributed to students' motivation for choosing the LLC for choice housing or their parents signing them up without their knowledge. Lack of formal expectations and accountability allowed LLC residents to skirt around any expected participation in LLC programming. General expectations for student participation in the LLC are listed on the website, but no expectations are included in the LLC promotional materials provided for our review. Student program leaders consistently identified LLC member participation as something they would like to see change about their LLCs, as Sarah noted, "I want them to be involved." Concomitantly, there was no mechanism for holding students accountable for non-participation in LLC events and activities. LLC coordinator Maria told us, "If they don't participate, there's no penalty. So, we can plan events, and no one comes to them. And that makes it a little difficult." This year, LLC residents were required to pay a $25 program fee with their application, but as LLC coordinator Tracy noted, "still some students have not been to a single event. So that just makes me wonder what their intention was of being in a living learning community." Another coordinator, Beth noted "I wish they would be required to participate so much, because you know some don't participate hardly at all." Frustration about the lack of participation and lack of accountability was palpable among most LLC coordinators and student program leaders.

Event Scheduling

A college campus the size of this university has many activities going on at any given moment and trying to find a free time when a particular LLC could meet was an obstacle most student program leaders and some LLC coordinators encountered. Finding a common time for the LLC participants

to have regular meetings and events to get the students engaged was difficult, as student program leader Ashley shared, "I guess I just wish my residents were all free at the same time."

Scheduling was compounded by students' work schedules and class periods, as LLC coordinator Joanne told us, "I know scheduling for anything for students is a challenge, just by their class schedules and everything else." Maria explained the scheduling issue, "Some of the things in terms of timeframes for students and their availability didn't work, so that presented challenges in trying to coordinate schedules for everyone. Because it was like, 'we can't do anything until 9 pm at night.'" The issue of consistent schedules throughout the semester was an obstacle mentioned by multiple student program leaders and LLC coordinators. Moreover, student schedules changed throughout the semester and what worked early in the semester often did not work later in the semester.

Discussion

The HRL staff has the responsibility of being the chief sensegivers for the overall LLC initiative. As a result, LLC coordinators and student program leaders take cues from HRL personnel when constructing their identities in terms of their formal roles within the initiative. Using Weick's (1995) sensemaking theory as a guide, individuals will always strive to "make sense" of their environment and construct their personal identity within their social context. In an organization, leaders can use sensegiving to help this process. Figure 1 provides a graphic display of the four types of organizational sensemaking: Guided, Fragmented, Restricted, and Minimal, each of which came into play in this case study (Maitlis, 2005).

Fragmented Sensemaking Occurred Among LLC Coordinators

LLC coordinators reside in the Fragmented Sensemaking quadrant, which results in a multitude of individualized accounts, a lack of shared meaning, and inconsistent action. An inclination for direction from HRL staff in terms of mission, common purpose, more uniform practices, and effective communication were desired. Moreover, when an LLC coordinator did not receive direction from HRL staff, they often turned to their college or department administrator or to one another for cues on how to enact their role. LLC coordinators felt a stronger connection to their individual college or department than to the overall initiative. LLC coordinator was not their primary identity and most did not see themselves as coordinators at all. The coordinator role was thrust on them and added to an already large menu of responsibilities to the college or department. They were essentially outsiders to the HRL staff and student program leader work arrangement and were trying to make sense of a lot of information over which they had little control.

Restricted Sensemaking Occurred Among Student Program Leaders

Student program leaders fell in the Restricted sensemaking quadrant, which results in a common narrative and consistent actions among them. Unitary sensemaking occurred for student program leaders specific to their identity construction related to their role of building community within the LLCs, connecting students with resources, and providing programming efforts for members. This mantra is the result of consistent messaging provided by the HRL staff through meetings and training. It further reinforces that the student program leaders see themselves as a part of the HRL staff team and have clear loyalties to the HRL department over and above the LLC's college or department. While restricted sensemaking might sound appealing due to the consistency of the

message, lack of animation on the part of the student program leaders could lead to difficulties with adapting to new circumstances as the LLCs evolve and change over time. Restricted sensemaking also does not encourage two-way communication with student program leaders or for them to make sense with HRL staff, instead they are merely recipients of the message.

Minimal Sensemaking at the LLC Program Level

At the LLC program level, the initiative is operating in the Minimal Organizational Sensemaking quadrant. Ineffective communication, ongoing logistical issues, and lack of student engagement resulted in one-time actions that were responsive in nature. Responses only occur when external issues triggered a necessary response. For example, the prevalent perception that students joined the LLC for preferable housing options knowing they would have no repercussions for lack of engagement. These responses are common when logistical issues or a lack of understanding on how to respond occur. This resulted in stakeholders enacting plausible responses in each situation rather than what HRL staff might have wanted to take place.

Implications for Practice

These implications for practice use the sensemaking-sensegiving framework to outline specific strategies for creating effective LLC programs. Discussed in this section are the need to implement a system of accountability, create a unifying curriculum, and then steps to move toward guided sensemaking.

Develop and Implement a System of Accountability

University leaders, in particular HRL professionals need to develop and implement a system of accountability across many different aspects of an overall LLC program. Doing so will help provide clearer expectations for all stakeholders (Keup, 2013; Kuh, 2008). Student learning outcomes were not clearly articulated nor were expectations for student engagement in the LLC. Thus, there is a need for those administrators responsible for the LLCs to establish and enforce student resident participation and engagement. Moreover, university HRL staff should create a system for the housing application and assignment process, dissemination of roster information, and hiring of student program leaders.

Findings related to students' choice in engagement within the LLC communities are another area for HRL staff to be mindful of regarding student autonomy and development, particularly as this generation of students, known as Generation Z (students born between 1995 and 2015[1]) have been characterized as being vastly different from previous generations (Seemiller & Grace, 2015). Gen Z college students tend to engage in constant communication with their parents, often using multiple forms of communication to stay connected to their family units (Seemiller & Grace, 2015; Trevino, 2018). Furthermore, many Gen Z parents "step in to minimize their children's failure. In doing so, Gen Z children miss some of life's biggest learning moments; as a result, they are not prone to demonstrate resilience" (Zarra, 2017, p. 1). One common form of Gen Z parents is the "helicopter-bulldozer" parents that are heavily involved in their children's lives, and in this case, making the decision for their young adult to participate in the LLC program. This is consistent with Gen Z parents being "heavy-handed in the selection of their children's teachers, classes, clubs, and

[1] There is not agreement among scholars regarding the exact date range that comprises Generation Z.

sports" (Zarra, 2017, p. 5). It is important to remember that this form of parenting has been present in all generations, however with the increase in technology, constant communication is more prevalent. One approach might be for HRL staff to create parent or family communication specific to student accountability and expectations for engagement in an LLC community.

Create Unifying Curriculum or Theme

Another implication for strengthening LLCs is creating a unifying curriculum or theme that is adopted LLC wide (Keup, 2013; Lenning & Ebbers, 1999; Lenning et al., 2013; Love & Tokuno, 1999). Doing so could provide a framework for LLC cross-collaboration, promote student engagement, serve as a guide toward articulating a universal purpose for the LLCs, and create a basis for training. LLCs where students have a shared academic interest and a common curricular experience are more likely to retain students after the first year (Purdie & Rosser, 2011). An option is a required orientation or first year seminar for the LLC members during the Fall semester, which could lead to greater motivation and commitment on the students' part, as they would not be able to opt out of the course or manipulate the system to their advantage. Moreover, a semester long orientation for LLC students has been shown to improve retention and graduation rates (Cambridge-Williams et al., 2013).

Moving Toward Guided Sensemaking

The first step in moving an LLC toward a guided state of sensemaking would be for university administrators in both Student Affairs and Academic Affairs divisions to clearly define the mission and purpose of their LLCs, including student learning outcomes (Tinto, 2003; Waiwaiole et al., 2016). Guided sensemaking requires Student Affairs and Academic Affairs leaders to continuously construct and promote understandings and explanations of processes and events (Maitlis, 2005). Academic Affairs and Student Affairs divisions have historically operated in separate spheres with delineated parameters of responsibility. Effective LLCs require a collaborative effort across these often-siloed divisions. Some steps to consider would be striving to define roles at all levels, working toward consistent multidirectional communication, and streamlining the reporting structure. These LLCs would benefit from tighter linkages among and between the LLC home college or campus department, HRL professional staff, and student program leaders to ensure resident learning outcomes are achieved.

University HRL administrators need to consider how LLC coordinators and student program leaders are formally involved within the program (Keup, 2013). The student program leaders are currently the linchpin in overall program implementation and resident engagement and understood their roles and responsibilities, although their sensemaking was restricted. However, without clear expectations or job descriptions, the LLC coordinators varied in their commitment and hands-on work in the LLCs, with their fragmented sensemaking seeing that as the student program leader's responsibility. University HRL staff should consider how the LLC coordinators are selected, what their job duties consist of, what an appropriate term of service might be, and how LLC coordinators are compensated, whether financially or through a reduced workload. These efforts could move an LLC program toward the desired guided state of sensemaking.

Universities are typically large, complex systems with divisions, units, and departments that tend to operate in isolation of each other. Thus, guided sensemaking will require university HRL administrators to engage in high levels of sensegiving with both the LLC coordinators and student

program leaders, in which dialogue and discussion are multidirectional. All stakeholders are involved and actively engaged in shaping interpretations of the meaning of the LLC program with the goal of developing shared understanding.

Conclusion

The findings from this study contribute to a deeper understanding of how LLCs function beyond what is articulated on an organizational chart or in written policies or procedures. This case illustrates how the sensemaking of good intentions and plans for the LLC was fragmented or restricted due to minimal sensegiving, which made implementation difficult. Because the sensegiving for implementing the LLC was often minimal and ambiguous (e.g. job descriptions, assignment of residents to the LLC, expectations for student participation), LLC coordinators and student program leaders made sense of the LLC program in different ways. Student program leaders had a better, albeit restricted, understanding of the LLC program whereas LLC coordinators sensemaking was fragmented, which in both cases resulted in confusion and frustration. Although organizational sensemaking is a theoretical construct, HRL professionals can use the forms of sensegiving to understand what might be happening in their programs and work toward achieving guided sensemaking.

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