Living-Learning: Intentional Holistic Student Formation

TEDS: We are a broadly evangelical seminary community united around the gospel of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We offer educational programs that prepare men and women for service to the global church in many vocational contexts, such as counseling, academic teaching and writing, pastoral leadership, and missional service in an increasingly diverse set of circumstances. We emphasize gospel centrality, inerrant Scripture, excellent evangelical scholarship that truly engages culture, and service to the church that we trust will continue to define TEDS. TEDS has 1,000 students at our Deerfield campus and we have 100 students in our residential program.

TEDS Student Affairs: We are stewards of a Christian learning community where students can discover their unique roles and responsibilities in God’s redemptive story through holistic discipleship. As partners with the faculty in facilitating a comprehensive education, our programs, service opportunities, resources, and activities flow from, demonstrate, and encourage a commitment to follow Christ as life-long learners in His way of love, servanthood, and humility, motivated by a sincere desire to honor Him through excellence in all things.

Living Learning Floors: LLFs exist to assist students in the integration of theological reflection with practical ministry application that meets needs for both personal growth and ministry engagement in a residential living community. We believe that the best opportunity to learn and grow holistically occurs when theological reflection, personal development and experiential learning meet. Combining the elements of classroom learning, living experiences and a caring community, the Living Learning Floors create an intentional environment designed to engage ideas, become bravely introspective and reflective, and build into one another and the larger Trinity community.

Benefits of LLFs particularly include holistic discipleship and space where specific passions can be explored more deeply. There is opportunity for leadership growth for RAs and residents.

Our desire is to see LLFs characterized by:
- Charitable dialogue
- Safe Relationships
- Deeper Community
- Skill Development

To hear from our students, check out http://divinity.tiu.edu/student-life/spiritual-formation/living-learning-floors/

History and Development: We began in 2008 with one Compassion and Justice floor (co-ed), and two Spiritual Formation floors (1 male, 1 female). There were 26 residents and it was primarily student led. The C & J floor was meant to act as a “minor league” for our Mosaic House--so students could
begin with a less intensive exposure to these issues before being immersed in an under-resourced and racially diverse community off campus. The SF floor started as a means to develop a system for graduates to disciple under graduates—the SF floors were initially settled as separate floors located in undergraduate dorms.

Currently we have one Compassion and Justice floor and one Spiritual Formation floor (both co-ed) and they are comprised of 20 residents. There is now more staff oversight, the floors are in a graduate building, and we’ve adjusted some of the requirements for each of the floors (see below).

Process overview: develop vision, coordinate buy-in from various stakeholders (housing, academics, field ed, residence life, etc.), and find key students who will champion focus of floors.

**Nuts and Bolts:** LLFs are housed on separate designated floors in apartment style living. Floor meetings are co-ed. There is a designated RA who oversees each and who leads weekly meetings. The RA receives coaching and curriculum development oversight from the RD. The curriculum is complementary to TEDS academic curriculum, but has no specific academic requirement. Both are open to all programs of study.

**Spiritual Formation Floor:**
- Two annual retreats
- Weekly floor meetings include Scripture, accountability for spiritual development and emotional healing, and the practice of spiritual disciplines. Also covers formation principles from the historic church
- Assigned reading each semester
- Off campus trips to local ministries
- Optional opportunity to lead Undergrad small group
- Learning objectives include: growth in Christ-likeness, growth in emotional maturity, assimilation of theory and practice.

**Compassion and Justice Floor:**
- Retreat at beginning of the year
- Weekly meetings in Mosaic Gatherings provide curriculum content
- Weekly participation with local ministry partner
- Weekly floor meeting to debrief service learning and Mosaic Gathering
- Learning objectives include increased cultural intelligence, leadership development for multicultural contexts, spiritual formation, developed Biblical theology of ministries of mercy and justice, ability to articulate Christian witness within a racialized society.

**Mosaic Ministries:** Mosaic Ministries is a Seminary - Church - Community collaboration for leadership development and community transformation. Mosaic is led by a FT Student Affairs staff member (who spends half his time in North Chicago, a partner city.)

It encompasses:
Mosaic Gatherings: a unique, collaborative learning community for the formation of Christ-centered
leaders who partner with the Holy Spirit in the gospel work of peacemaking, truth proclaiming and bridge building.

Mosaic House: an intentional Christian community for students who seek to grow in practice of reconciliation, with a focus on prayer, discipleship and hospitality in North Chicago.

Mosaic Church Network: diverse churches committed to healthy mutual partnerships across race and socio-economic divides.

Mosaic Partnerships: encompasses volunteering/community development with the hope of students changing life direction through healthy involvement.

LLF Best Practices and Strengths:

- Elements of teaching from faculty/staff which are coupled with experiences
- Retreats
- Weekly Meetings
- Floor Requirements (readings, shared experiences, etc.)
- Field Ed credit given for engagement on the floor
- Residential is the recommended form
- Be intentional about design for shared space
- Educate Admissions
- Male/Female integration
- Ask floors to host events for community

LLF Obstacles and Hurdles:

- Time demands on graduate students
- No kitchens in LLF suites
- No financial incentive
- Balancing prescribed curriculum with needs of residents from year to year
- Requires high level skill to navigate difficult group dynamics and topics
- Broad spectrum of Evangelical perspectives on each of these LLF topics

Assessment:

- Set unique goals with each LLF RA
- “Tell me about the conversation you had yesterday with your floor...”
- December and May Resident survey

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