

Learning Community Assessment: Milestones on the Road Less Traveled

**Report from the Learning Community
Assessment Subcommittee**

ISU Learning Community Institute

May 12, 2003



LC Assessment Subcommittee

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Subcommittee Goals

- Conduct campus wide LC assessment
- Develop an approach to strengthening individual LC assessment
- Provide consultation to individual learning communities
- Attempt to identify successful components of the LC experience

Presentation Overview*

- Summary of subcommittee activities
- Assessment results
 - Big 3 accountability dimensions (participation, retention, GPA)
 - Preliminary data on what works
 - NSSE data
 - ISU survey data
 - preliminary data from the expanded study of learning communities
- Future directions of the subcommittee

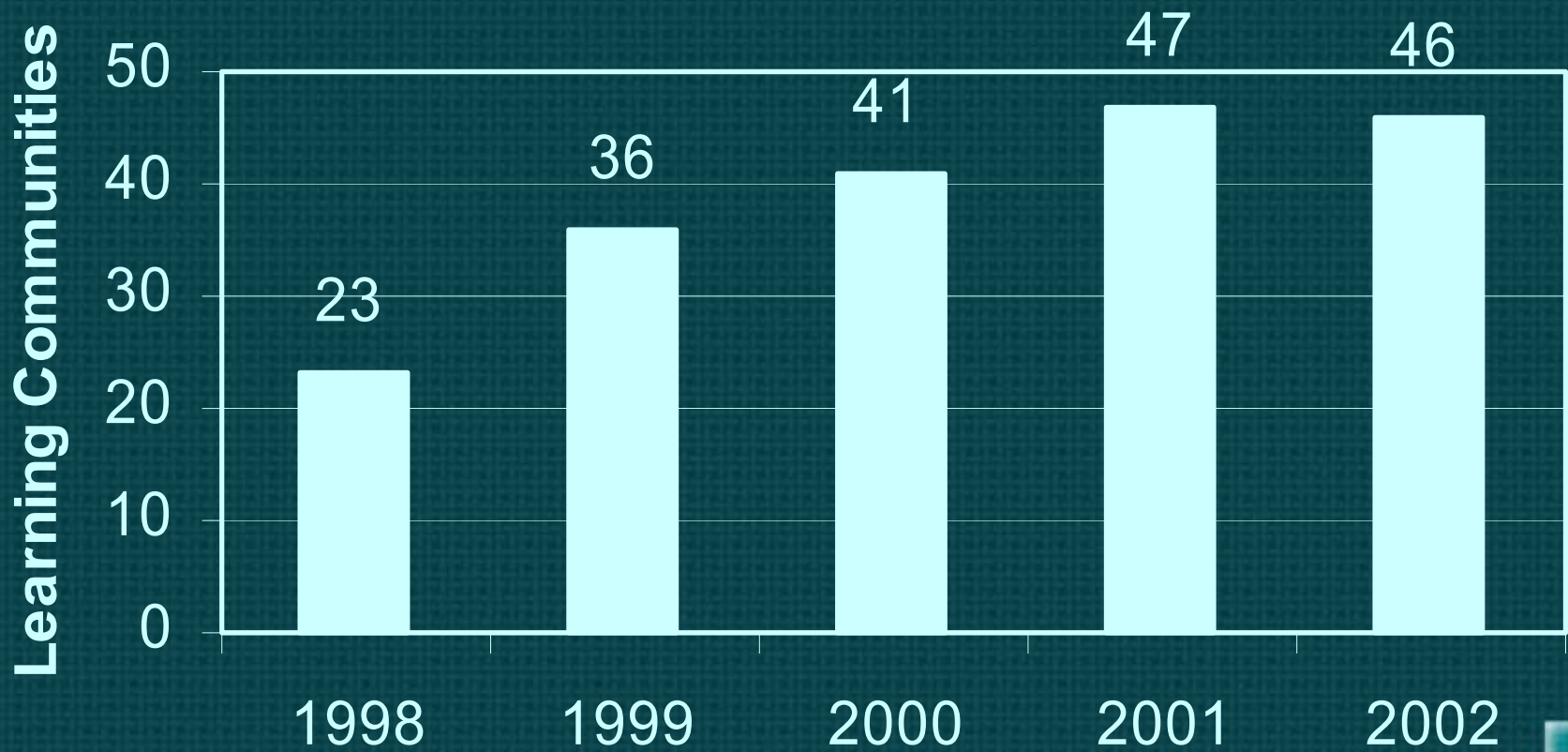
Subcommittee Activities

- Campus wide assessments
 - Participation rates in learning communities
 - LC participation and retention
 - LC participation and academic performance
- ISU survey administration, data analyses, and reports to LC coordinators
- Consultation with individual learning communities

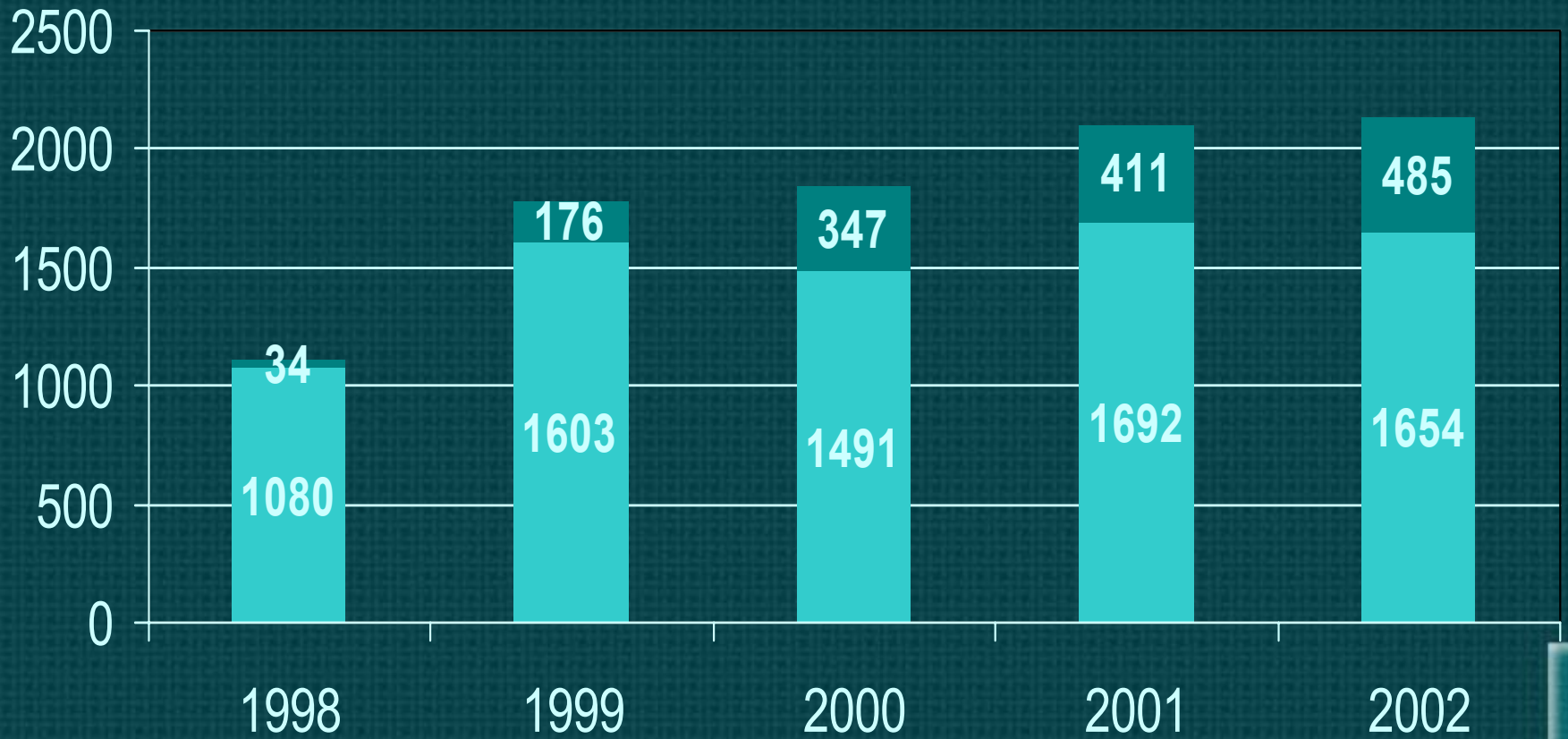
Subcommittee Activities

- Workshop and “brown bag” discussions
 - Mid-Semester Feedback Techniques
 - Using Focus Groups to Assess Your LC
 - Qualitative Data Analysis
 - Interpreting Survey Results
 - Involving Graduate Research Assistants
- Report on needed resources for learning community assessment

LC Participation



■ First-Year, Full-Time Students ■ Other Students



Percent of Various Groups Participating in F2002 LCs

- First-time full-time freshmen 39.6%
- Gender
 - Men 42.0%
 - Women 36.8%

- Ethnicity

– American Indian or Alaskan Native	33.3%
– African American	52.2%
– Asian or Pacific Islander	44.2%
– Hispanic	40.4%
– International	14.1%
– White	39.4%

First-Year, Full-Time Student Participation Rates by Colleges

College	Number of LC Participants	Percent LC Participation
Agriculture	251	66%
Business	143	30%
Design	131	31%
Education	93	47%
Engineering	661	61%
FCS	57	39%
LAS	318	22%

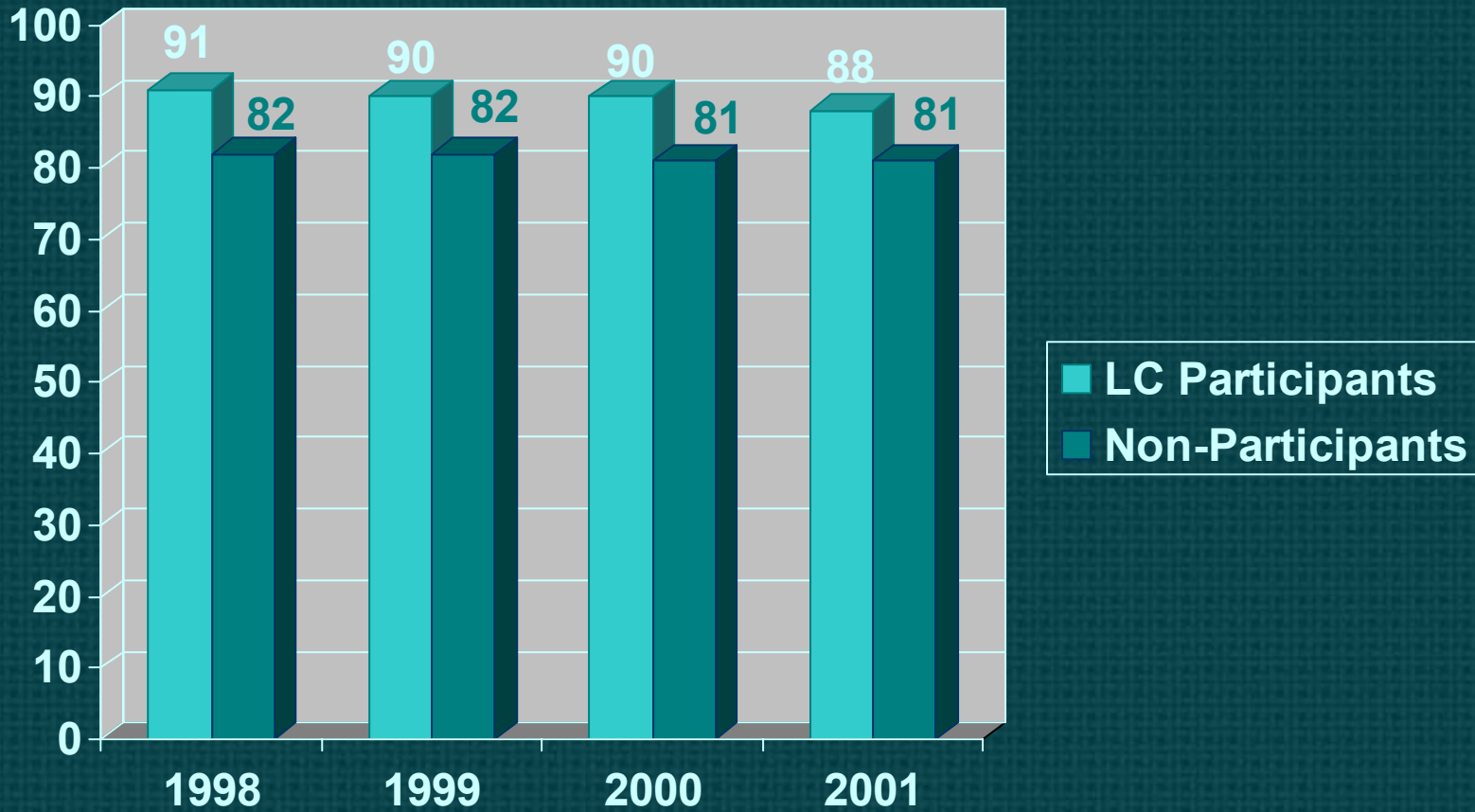
First-Year, Full-Time Student Participation Rates by Colleges

- Highest rates again this year are:
 - Agriculture (66.2%)
 - Engineering (60.6%)
 - Education (47.4%)
- Highest number of participants again this year is Engineering (n = 661)

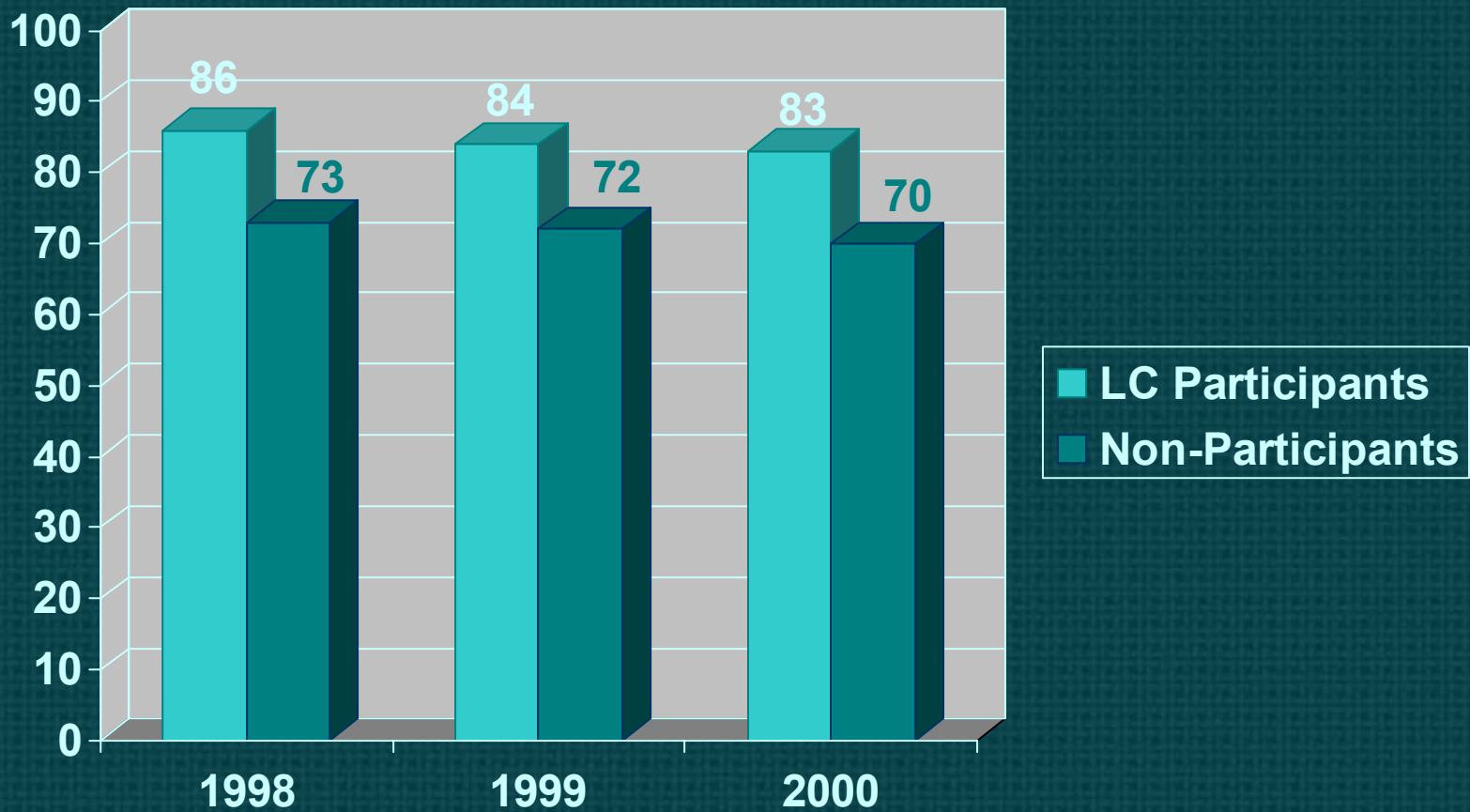
University Retention Analyses

- Examined four entry-year cohorts of first-year full-time students
 - 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001
- Retention defined as enrollment in classes on the 10th day of the next year
- Graduates counted as retained

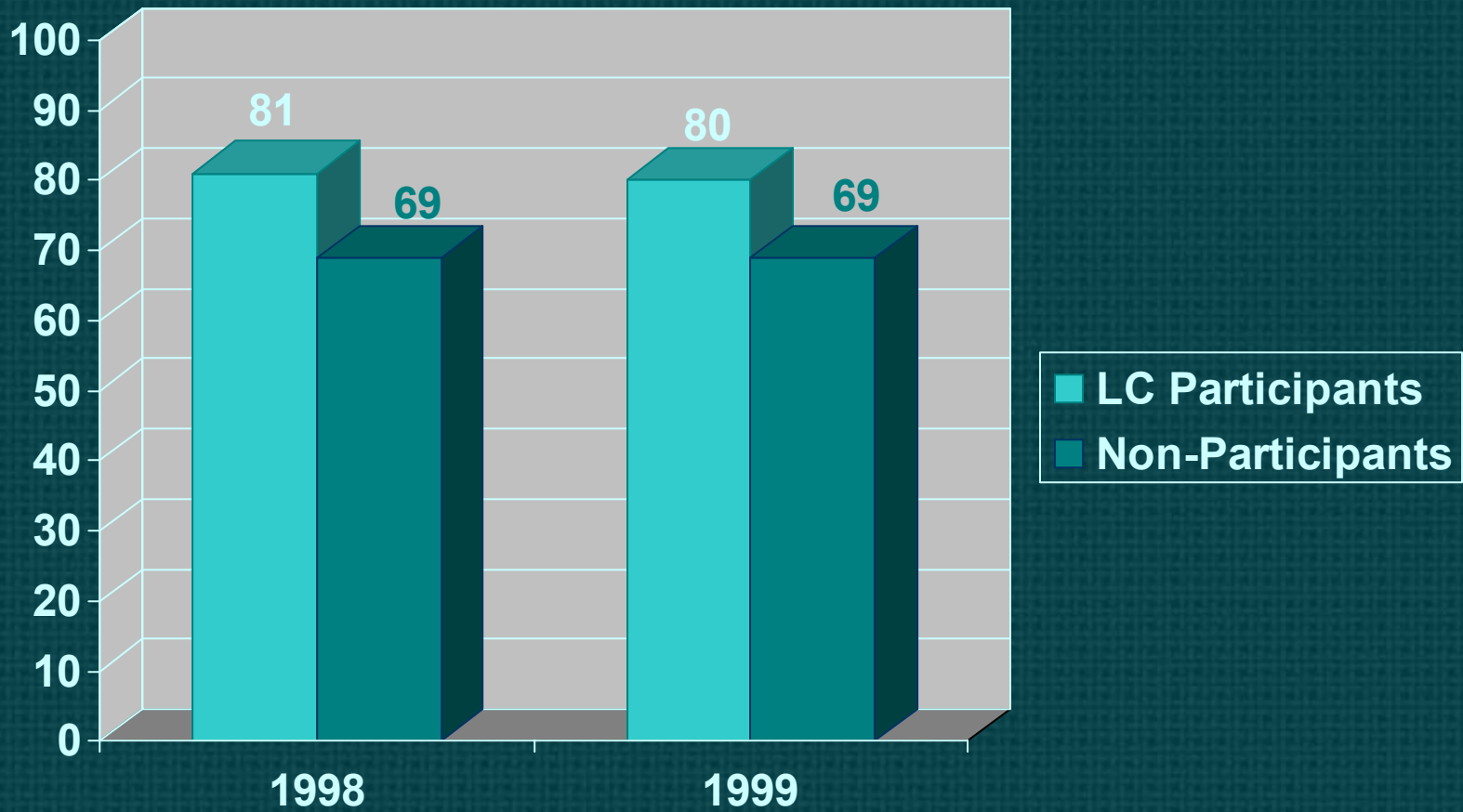
One-Year University Retention



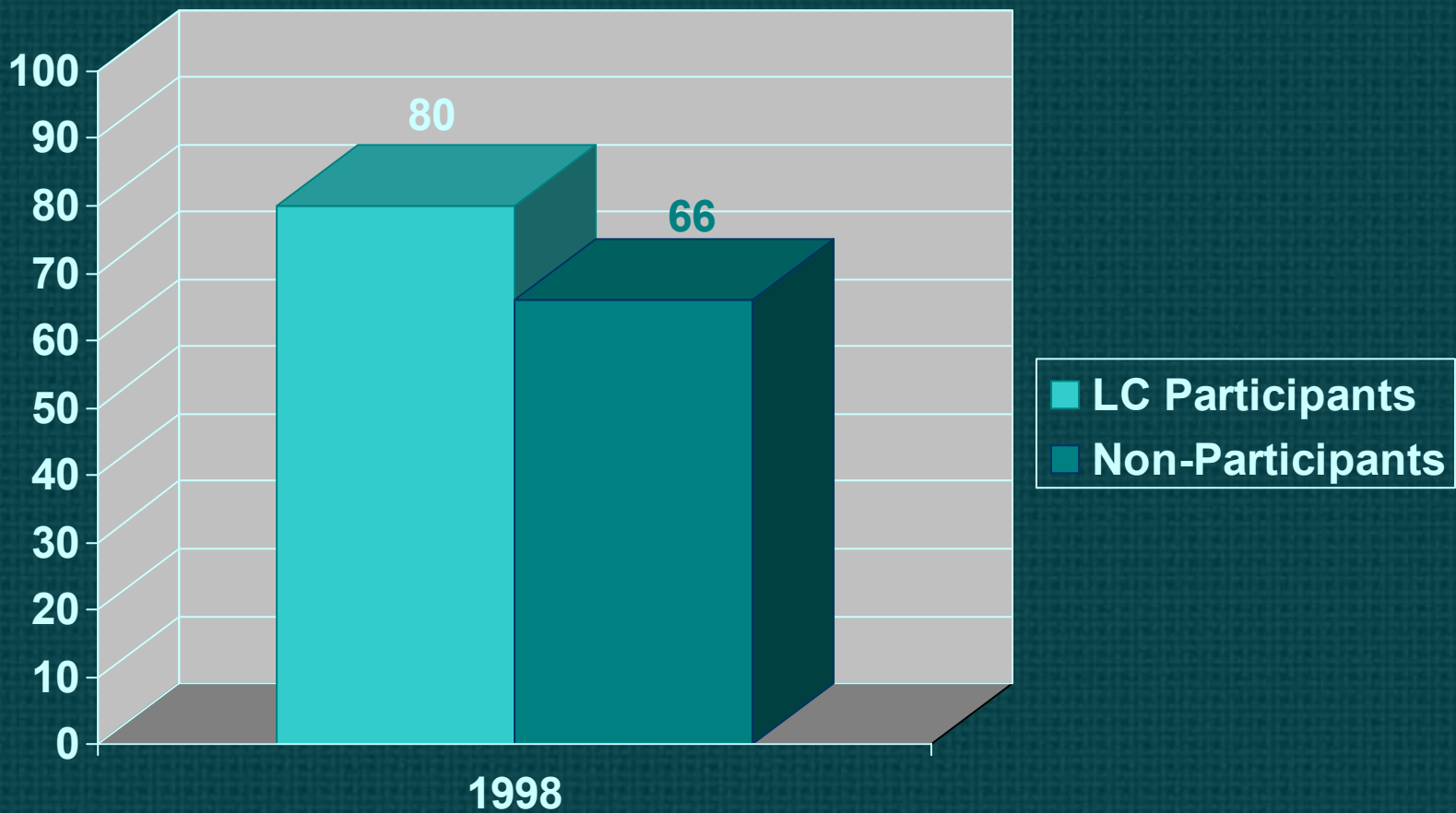
Two-Year University Retention



Three-Year University Retention



Four-Year University Retention



Summary of Retention Analyses

- Higher retention rates associated with LC participation was consistent across cohorts
- Difference sustained across years
 - 8% greater retention to second year
 - 12% to 14% greater retention third and fourth years

Summary of Retention Analyses

- Retention differences remain statistically significant after controlling for HSR and ACT using hierarchical logistic regression
- Retention rates adjusted for HSR and ACT remained greater for LC participants by about 5% for retention to second year and about 8% thereafter.

Summary of Retention Analyses

- Conservative analyses based on retention rates adjusted for HSR and ACT indicate that the higher retention rates associated with LC participation yielded:
- \$2.5 million in tuition savings on a \$1.5 million initial investment during first three years of program
- Now that program is fully in place, the yield is about \$1.6 million per year

Academic Performance: First-Term GPA

Year	LC Participants			Non-Participants			Sig.
	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	
1998	2.93	0.8	1080	2.52	0.93	2720	**
1999	2.87	0.82	1603	2.52	0.92	2419	**
2000	2.87	0.82	1491	2.48	0.93	2800	**
2001	2.84	0.84	1687	2.56	0.91	2853	**

**p< .01

- Better first-term GPA for LC participants is consistent across cohorts
- When statistically controlling for HSR and ACT, the difference shrinks considerably but remains statistically significant ($p < .01$)

What LC Features Might Yield Such Results?

- ISU Survey Data
- NSSE Data
- Expanded Learning Community Study

ISU Undergraduate Education Survey

- Survey was administered in Fall 2000 and Fall 2001 using a pre-test/post-test format both semesters
- Because of the consistency of results and the work load involved in administering the survey, it was administered using a post-test format in Fall 2002
- Findings have been quite consistent from year to year

Consistent Survey Findings

- Relative to non-participants, LC students more strongly agreed with the following statements:
 - I was able to earn high grades in classes
 - My professors had high expectations for me
 - I better understand the nature of my major
 - I have had experiences that “fit together” in helping meet goals as a student
 - I have received prompt feedback about progress in classes

Consistent Survey Findings

- Relative to non-participants, LC students were more satisfied with:
 - Opportunities to interact closely with faculty
 - Level of individual support, encouragement from faculty
 - Opportunities to participate in a department club, resident government, or other organization
 - Opportunities to develop or participate in study groups

Consistent Survey Findings

- Relative to non-participants, LC students were more satisfied with:
 - Opportunities to apply learning to real-world problems
 - Opportunities to practice skills
 - Overall quality of classmates
 - Overall experiences at ISU

Consistent Survey Findings

- Relative to non-participants, LC students reported spending significantly more time involved in the following activities:
 - Studying in groups
 - Community service/volunteer work

New Survey Findings This Year

- Significantly stronger agreement with the following experiences:
 - I was able to see connections among classes
 - I was able to see connections between personal experiences and class learning
- Being significantly more satisfied with:
 - Opportunities to interact with people from different cultural backgrounds

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)

- Initially co-sponsored by the
 - Pew Forum on Undergraduate Learning
 - Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching
- Is now self-supporting

- Measures the extent to which students are engaged in educational practices that promote learning
 - Active learning
 - Contact/cooperation/collaboration
 - among students
 - Between students and faculty
 - Time-on-task

- Administered through Indiana University
- Randomly selected first-year and senior students
- We receive
 - Individual item summaries
 - Benchmark scores
 - Statistical comparisons to other institutions

Comparison of Responses from First-Year LC Participants & Non-Participants

- LC participants were more likely to
 - Work with classmates outside of class
 - Tutor or teach other students
 - Write papers between 5 and 19 pages
 - Participate in a community-based project as part of a course

- LC participants were more likely to
 - Talk about career plans with a faculty member or advisor
 - Work with faculty members on activities other than coursework
 - Report positive relationships with faculty members
 - Report that ISU has helped them learn to analyze quantitative problems

ISU Expanded Retention and Academic Performance Study

- What characteristics of teams might account for findings?
- Team as the unit of analysis
- Dependent Variables
 - Participants satisfaction with experience
 - Retention
 - First-term GPA

- Independent Variables
 - Team structure
 - Nature of learning experience
 - Degree of instructional emphasis
 - Student characteristics
- Data Collection & Sources
 - Fall 2000, 2001, & 2002 cohorts
 - UG Survey, LC Coordinators Survey, Institutional Records

Factor Analysis of Student Survey

- Three factors emerged reliably across the cohorts
 - Best Practices
 - Interactive/Communicative Activities with Others
 - Available and Helpful Adviser

Best Practices Items

- Experiences that “fit together” to help me meet my goals as a student
- Seeing connections between classes
- Seeing connections between personal experiences and class learning
- Opportunities to apply learning to real world problems
- Opportunities to practice skills
- Opportunities to develop or participant in study groups

Best Practices Items (cont.)

- Professors had high expectations for me
- Opportunities to interact closely with faculty
- Receiving prompt feedback in classes
- Level of support, encouragement, or advice from faculty
- Receiving high quality instruction
- Opportunities to work collaboratively with other students on projects

Best Practices Items (cont.)

- Opportunities to participate in clubs, etc.
- Opportunities to interact with people from different cultural backgrounds
- Having high quality classmates
- Better understanding of anticipated major
- Ability to earn high grades

Interactive/Communicative Activities Items

- Talking with instructors outside of class
- Talking with advisor
- Engaging in leadership activities
- Participating in community service/volunteer activities
- Studying with others in groups

Advising Items

- Having an available advisor
- Having a helpful advisor

Self-Assessed Skills at Post-Test

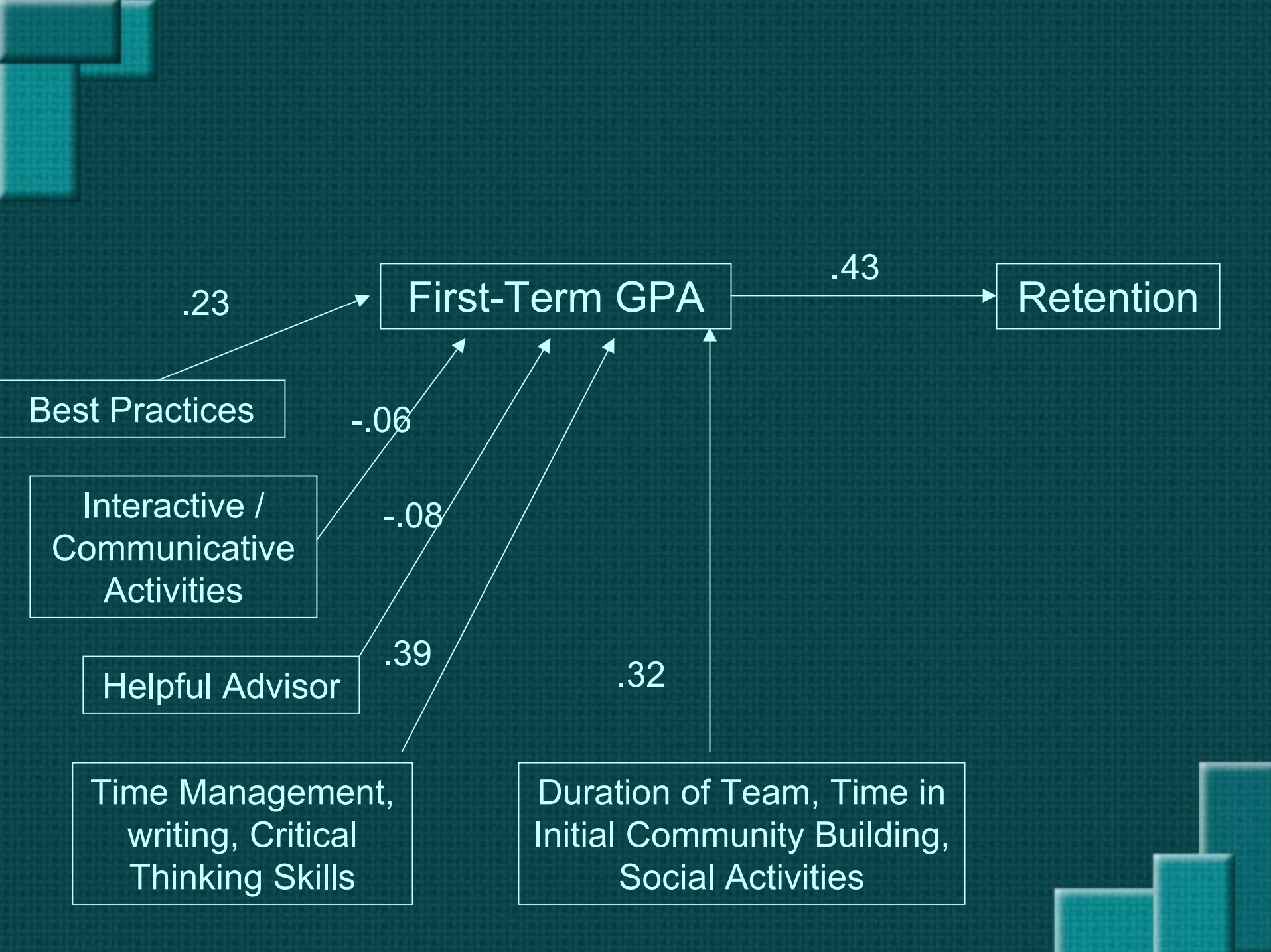
- Study Skills/Time Management
- Written Communication
- Oral Communication
- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- Knowledge of the discipline, career choices, and university resources

Peer Mentor Evaluation

- Numbers
- Availability
- Helpfulness
- Level of concern
- Knowledge of discipline
- Knowledge of ISU resources

Structural Components

- Team size
- Residential nature of team
- Faculty contact
- Use of special physical resources
- Duration of learning team
- Hours spent in initial community building
- Degree of structured teamwork required
- Social activities (hours and events)



.23

Best Practices

First-Term GPA

.43

Retention

-.06

Interactive /
Communicative
Activities

-.08

Helpful Advisor

.39

Time Management,
writing, Critical
Thinking Skills

.32

Duration of Team, Time in
Initial Community Building,
Social Activities

Future Emphasis of LC Assessment Subcommittee

- Continue university-level assessment
- Emphasize assessing for improvement and enhanced learning
- Strengthening *individual* LC assessment
- Greater knowledge of the particular
- Provide direction without stifling creativity