

**Enrollment Services Survey and Assessment
Iowa State University**

**Awareness and Perceptions of
Learning Communities among
Iowa State Freshmen**

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Awareness and Perceptions of Learning Communities among Iowa State Freshmen

Abstract

For this survey, ESSAy contacted current Iowa State freshmen that entered the university in Fall 2001 for the purpose of determining their awareness and perceptions of learning communities at Iowa State University. Two subpopulations were identified within the total population of 4,161 students: 1) students who had been or were currently members of a learning community at Iowa State, and 2) students who had never been a member of a learning community at Iowa State. A stratified random sample of approximately 150 students was drawn from each of these subpopulations. A total of 300 students were contacted, and 187 of those responded to the survey—98 from group one and 89 from group two. Students who responded indicated membership in 23 different learning communities.

Overall, approximately 83% of those surveyed were aware of the existence of learning communities on the Iowa State campus. For those students, the most common method of receiving information about learning communities was a letter or brochure (58%), followed by a member of the admissions staff (29%) and an academic advisor (16%). Group membership and making new friends was the most commonly cited benefit of learning community involvement (62%), and academic support was cited by more than half of the respondents (55%). Finally, when asked to pinpoint negative or potentially negative aspects of learning community involvement, almost half of the students surveyed were unsure (20%) or could think of no negative aspects (29%). Lack of opportunities to meet people in other majors and colleges was the third most frequent drawback (20%). Differences were found between the frequencies that members and non-members of learning communities spent studying informally with others and participating in formal or organized study groups, with learning community members indicating more frequent engagement in these activities.

For those students who were members of learning communities, the most common factors influencing their decisions to join a learning community were academic support (86%), making new friends and being part of a group (80%), and gaining entrance into particular classes (75%). Nearly 86% of these students would join a learning community again.

For those students who were not members of a learning community, the most common factors influencing their decision were the perceived time commitment (61%), lack of information (49%), and the location of learning community housing (45%). Given the chance to be an entering freshman once again, nearly 61% of these students would choose not to join a learning community. However, in retrospect, almost 25% indicated that they would choose to join a learning community.

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to collect information from Iowa State freshmen that entered the university in Fall 2001 for the purpose of determining their awareness and perceptions of learning communities at Iowa State University. The resulting information can then be used to ensure that entering freshmen are aware and have an accurate perception of the opportunities afforded by learning communities at Iowa State University as well as the potential drawbacks.

Method

The Enrollment Services Survey and Assessment Team (ESSAy) contacted Iowa State freshmen that entered the university in Fall 2001 for the purpose of determining their awareness and perceptions of learning communities at Iowa State University. Two subpopulations were identified within the total population of 4,161 students: 1) students who had been or were currently members of a learning community at Iowa State, and 2) students who had never been a member of a learning community at Iowa State. A sample of approximately 150 students was drawn from each of these subpopulations. A total of 300 students were contacted between 10 April 2002 and 18 April 2002. Of the students contacted, 187 responded to the survey—98 from group one (current or former learning community members) and 89 from group two (students who had never been a member of a learning community at Iowa State). The complete survey is provided in Appendix A.

Of the 187 respondents, 32 (17%) indicated that they were not aware of the existence of learning communities at Iowa State University before beginning classes in Fall 2001. While 20 of these students had never been members of a learning community, the remaining 12 students were at the time of the survey or had previously been members of learning communities. Only those students who indicated an awareness of learning communities prior to beginning classes in Fall 2001 (n=155, or 85%) continued with survey items two through six.

Of the 155 respondents who were aware of learning communities at Iowa State prior to beginning coursework for Fall 2001, 86 (55%) identified themselves as current or former learning community members. These students were asked to respond to items seven through ten. The remaining 69 students (45%) indicated that they had never been members of an Iowa State learning community. These students were asked to respond to items eleven through thirteen.

Students from 23 different learning communities responded to the survey items. Appendix B lists the learning communities with which respondents were affiliated and the number of students indicating each.

Findings

All respondents

This section describes the responses to each survey item. The first item asked the respondents whether or not they were aware of the existence of learning communities (LCs) at Iowa State before they started classes in Fall 2001. Most of the 187 respondents were aware of LCs (157 or 83%), whereas 32 (17%) were not. Only the respondents who were aware of the existence of

learning communities at Iowa State were asked to respond to the remaining items. Therefore, analysis of items two through six is based on the answers of the 155 respondents who were aware of the existence learning communities prior to the beginning of the Fall 2001 semester. Of these 155 respondents, 86 (55%) had been or were currently members of a learning community at Iowa State, and 69 (45%) had never been a member of an Iowa State learning community.

Item two asked all 155 respondents who indicated an awareness of learning communities to indicate the methods by which they had received information about Iowa State learning communities. Each respondent was asked to name as many sources of information as applicable. The caller did not provide the specific options; rather, each student's responses were matched to items on a list of possible options provided to the callers. The total number and percentage of respondents as well as the number and percentage of learning community members and non-members indicating the following sources of information appear in Table 1.

Table 1: Sources of learning community information identified by entering freshmen

Source	All Respondents		LC Members		LC Non-Members	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Brochure or letter	89	57.42%	51	59.30%	38	55.07%
Admissions staff member	43	27.74%	27	31.40%	16	23.19%
Other sources	26	16.77%	14	16.28%	12	17.39%
Advisor at Iowa State	24	15.48%	10	11.63%	14	20.29%
Student already enrolled at Iowa State	11	7.10%	2	2.33%	9	13.04%
Other friend	9	5.81%	5	5.81%	4	5.80%
Other Iowa State faculty/staff member	7	4.52%	3	3.49%	4	5.80%
Family member	6	3.87%	6	6.98%	0	0.00%
Iowa State Web site	4	2.58%	2	2.33%	2	2.90%
Residence Hall staff member	2	1.29%	1	1.16%	1	1.45%
High school counselor/teacher	1	0.65%	0	0.00%	1	1.45%
Iowa State CD-ROM	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Other Web site	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%

The most common source of information was “brochures or letter” (57%, n= 89), followed by an “admissions staff member” (28%, n=43). There were some differences in the responses between those who were or had been members of learning communities and those who were not. Most notably, 20% of non-members cited advisors at Iowa State as sources of information, as compared to 12% of members. Students who were already enrolled at Iowa State University were sources of information for 13% of non-members compared to 2% of members. None of the non-members had received any information from family, as compared to 7% of members who named a relative as a source of information.

The majority of the respondents indicating “other sources” received information about learning communities at orientation (16), had received information from an unidentified source during a visit to the campus (3), or learned about learning communities at Destination Iowa State (2). Three of the respondents had received an email about learning communities, one indicated a

“phone call” as a source, and one indicated that s/he was placed into a learning community automatically.

Item three asked students to respond to the following question: “In what ways might a freshman at Iowa State benefit from being part of a learning community?” The respondents were given an opportunity to select as many choices as applicable from a prepared list of possible responses. The response options and the number and percentage of respondents selecting each appear in Table 2. Figures are also broken down for learning community members and non-members.

Table 2: Freshman perceptions of benefits of learning community involvement

Benefits	All Respondents		LC Members		LC Non-Members	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Making new friends/Being part of a group	96	61.94%	62	72.09%	34	49.28%
Academic support/Study groups /Review sessions	84	54.19%	49	56.98%	35	50.72%
Living with or near others with similar interests	33	21.29%	21	24.42%	12	17.39%
Scheduling classes/Getting into particular classes	26	16.77%	17	19.77%	9	13.04%
Social activities	21	13.55%	17	19.77%	4	5.80%
Interacting with faculty	20	12.90%	11	12.79%	9	13.04%
Interacting with upper-division students studying same discipline	20	12.90%	11	12.79%	9	13.04%
Unsure/Don't know	16	10.32%	4	4.65%	12	17.39%
Earning higher grades/Getting into program	13	8.39%	6	6.98%	7	10.14%
Living in a particular hall/house/association	5	3.23%	5	5.81%	0	0.00%
Peer Mentor	4	2.58%	2	2.33%	2	2.90%
Investigate or determine a major or career interest	3	1.94%	2	2.33%	1	1.45%
Access to specific amenities (like Design Studio space)	2	1.29%	2	2.33%	0	0.00%
Service activities	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
No benefits	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Other	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%

Making new friends and being part of a group was the most common response. This benefit was also cited more frequently by members (72%) than non-members (49%). Likewise, the ability to schedule or gain entry into particular classes was also cited more frequently by members (20%) than non-members (13%). In contrast, the most frequent response provided by non-members (51%) was academic support.

Item four asked students to respond to the following question: “What are the negative aspects that you associate with being part of a learning community?” The respondents were given an opportunity to provide as many responses as they chose. The caller matched each response to one

of several options, but the caller did not provide possible answers. Responses that did not match any of the alternatives were also recorded.

Table 3 shows the number and percentage of responses for all respondents, learning community members, and non-members. Most of the respondents (28%, n=44) did not perceive any drawbacks to learning community participation. With the exception of more non-members who indicated “unsure/don’t know”—29% of non-members compared to 14% of members—the responses were fairly consistent for both groups.

Table 3: Freshman perceptions of negative aspects of learning community involvement

Negative Aspects	All Respondents		LC Members		LC Non-Members	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
No negative aspects	44	28.39%	25	29.07%	19	27.54%
Unsure/Don’t know	32	20.65%	12	13.95%	20	28.99%
Not meeting people in other majors/colleges	30	19.35%	19	22.09%	11	15.94%
Other	21	13.55%	13	15.12%	8	11.59%
Takes too much time	19	12.26%	11	12.79%	8	11.59%
Enrolling in specific or extra courses/Didn’t get to pick classes	10	6.45%	6	6.98%	4	5.80%
Living in a particular hall/house/association	9	5.81%	5	5.81%	4	5.80%
Too hard to change majors	1	0.65%	1	1.16%		0.00%
Extra cost	0	0.00%		0.00%		0.00%

In order to determine the frequency of participation in selected activities related to academics, survey participants were asked to rank the frequency of their involvement in each on a scale of 1 (indicating that the respondent never participates) to 5 (indicating that s/he participates very frequently). For comparative purposes, rankings were averaged for members, non-members, and the total group of respondents. Table 4 lists the activities about which the respondents were questioned and includes average rankings for each item by members, non-members, and overall.

Table 4: Frequency of engagement in selected activities

Activity	All Respondents		LC Members		LC Non-Members	
	Avg.	Std. Dev.	Avg.	Std. Dev.	Avg.	Std. Dev.
Getting together with other students to study informally	3.37	1.17	3.67	1.15	2.99	1.08
Thinking about how ideas covered in one class relate to those covered in other classes	3.06	1.00	3.20	1.00	2.88	0.98
Assisting other students with coursework	3.01	0.87	3.23	0.78	2.72	0.91
Working on group projects or presentations	2.95	1.18	3.01	1.21	2.88	1.16

Talking with a faculty member or instructor outside of class	2.63	0.98	2.72	1.01	2.52	0.93
Participating in discussions about ideas presented in class	2.56	1.03	2.73	0.96	2.35	1.07
Attending class unprepared (such as not doing the reading, etc.)	2.39	1.00	2.43	0.96	2.35	1.05
Participating in a formal, organized study group	2.24	1.20	2.51	1.23	1.90	1.06
Participating in hands-on activities that reinforce concepts covered in class (not including regularly scheduled labs)	2.23	1.00	2.36	0.94	2.06	1.06
Skipping class	2.16	1.09	2.09	1.08	2.25	1.10
Attending out-of-class lectures or presentations related to course content (not including regularly scheduled lab or discussion sections)	2.12	1.01	2.19	1.03	2.03	0.97

Overall, the activity in which the respondents reported engaging in most frequently was getting together with other students to study informally. In contrast, the item in which students reported themselves to be least frequently engaged is out-of-class lectures or presentations.

Students who are members of learning communities engage more frequently in “getting together with other students to study informally” and “participating in a formal, organized study group.” Learning community members ranked the frequency of their engagement in these activities .68 and .61 points higher on average than non-members. As a whole, the learning community members surveyed indicated more frequent participation than non-learning community members in all activities about which they were asked—with the exception of skipping class.

Learning Community Members

Items seven through ten were asked only of the 86 students surveyed who indicated current or former participation in a learning community at Iowa State University.

Item seven asked the respondent to identify the learning community of which s/he was or had been a member. Students from 23 different learning communities responded to the survey items. Learning communities with which the most respondents indicated affiliation are the Freshman Honors Program (23), Business Learning Teams (7), CELT/Computer engineering (7), and various WiSE options (7). Several learning communities were represented by single respondents, and some learning communities were not represented among survey respondents. Additional information about learning community representation appears in Appendix B.

For item eight, callers provided a list of factors that may have influenced the student’s decision to join a learning community. Respondents were asked to indicate whether or not each factor influenced their decision to join a learning community, and, if so, how important that factor was in their decision. A scale of 1 to 5 was used to rank the importance of each factor in their decision where 1 indicates “no importance” and 5 “very high importance.”

Table 5 shows the responses to item eight, in descending order according to the number of respondents who identified each. The number and percentage of respondents indicating each item, the averaged ranking they assigned to each item, and the standard deviation of these values are also presented.

Table 5: Factors influencing a freshman’s decision to join a learning community

Factors	Students		Rankings	
	Number	Percentage	Average	Std.dev.
Academic support	73	84.88%	3.70	0.94
Wanted to meet new friends quickly	67	77.91%	3.40	1.03
Wanted to get into “closed” or hard-to-get classes	64	74.42%	3.63	1.28
Opportunity to investigate possible major or career	61	70.93%	3.34	1.11
Wanted to live near other students who are like you	55	63.95%	3.47	1.17
Advisor’s recommendation	55	63.95%	3.71	1.08
Opportunity to participate in out-of-class activities	52	60.47%	3.17	1.00
Peer Mentor	51	59.30%	3.00	1.15
Parent’s recommendation	51	59.30%	3.24	1.18
Wanted to live in a particular house/hall/association	41	47.67%	3.51	1.21
Wanted to live near other students who are not like you	34	39.53%	2.38	1.21
Friend’s recommendation	32	37.21%	3.00	1.22
Required to join a learning community	15	17.44%	2.73	1.62

The most frequently identified factor in the decision to join a learning community was academic support. Most of the students who responded to this item (85%) indicated that this factor influenced their decision, and the average importance ranking was 3.70. Other influential factors were the opportunity to make new friends quickly, the desire to gain entry into hard-to-get classes, and the opportunity to investigate possible majors or careers. Seventeen percent of the respondents indicated that they were required to join a learning community.

The ninth item provided the students surveyed with an opportunity to add additional factors influential in their decision. No additional factors were mentioned.

The tenth item asked respondents to indicate in retrospect whether or not they would again choose to join a learning community. The vast majority (n=72, or 84%) indicated that they would again choose to be a part of a learning community. The remaining students would choose not to be involved (n=7, or 8%) or were undecided (n=5, or 6%).

Non-members of Learning Communities

Items eleven through thirteen were asked only of the 69 students surveyed who indicated no current or former participation in a learning community at Iowa State University but who were aware of the existence of learning communities at Iowa State prior to beginning classes in Fall 2001.

Similar to item eight, item eleven asked students to indicate factors influencing their decision of whether or not to become involved in a learning community. For item eleven, callers provided a list of factors that may have influenced the student's decision not to join a learning community. Respondents were asked to indicate whether or not each factor influenced their decision, and, if so, how important that factor was in their decision. A scale of 1 to 5 was used to rank the importance of each factor in their decision where 1 indicates "no importance" and 5 "very high importance."

Table 6 shows the responses to item eleven, ordered by the number of respondents who identified each. The number and percentage of respondents indicating each item, the average rank assigned to each item on a scale of 1 to 5, and the standard deviation of these values are also presented.

Table 6: Factors influencing a freshman's decision not to join a learning community

Factors	Students		Rankings	
	Number	Percentage	Average	Std.dev.
Time commitment	42	60.87%	3.10	1.05
Did not have enough information about learning communities	34	49.28%	2.59	0.78
Location of learning community housing	31	44.93%	2.71	1.13
No learning communities for my major	17	24.64%	2.94	1.56
Friend recommended against it	9	13.04%	2.22	0.97
Missed deadline to apply	9	13.04%	1.89	1.17
Learning community of choice was full	8	11.59%	3.13	1.55
Parent recommended against it	4	5.80%	2.00	1.15
Advisor recommended against it	3	4.35%	2.33	2.33

The most frequently cited factor was the perceived time commitment, identified by 61% of respondents with an average importance ranking of 3.1. The factors identified least frequently by respondents were negative recommendations from parents and advisors. While missing the deadline to apply was identified as an influential factor for 13% of the respondents, those who missed the deadline assigned this factor a low ranking in their decision making process.

Item twelve provided the students surveyed with an opportunity to add additional factors influential in their decision. While no commonalities could be identified, answers provided ranged from not wanting to be "tied down" to wanting a single room. A complete list of responses to item twelve appears in Appendix C.

The final item asked respondents to indicate in retrospect whether or not they would choose to join a learning community. While a majority (n=42, or 61%) indicated that they would make the same choice not to become involved in a learning community, almost one-third of the students

surveyed were unsure or would choose to join a learning community (n=27, or 31%). Seventeen students of the 69 surveyed responded that they would join a learning community (25%), while 10 students were unsure (14%).

Conclusions

In general, awareness of the existence of learning communities at Iowa State among entering freshmen is high. About 17% of the freshmen surveyed, however, were unaware of the existence of learning community programs or at least did not recognize the programs as “learning communities” prior to beginning their coursework at Iowa State in Fall 2001, about one-third of whom were actually current or former learning community members. Furthermore, entering freshmen are likely to have heard about learning communities from multiple sources.

Official printed materials such as brochures and letters are by far the most common method by which information is transmitted—or at least the most memorable. Entering students also receive information about learning communities from admissions staff members, from academic advisors, during orientation and campus visit programs, and from current students. Significantly, more learning community members than non-members received information from brochures and letters, family members, and members of the admissions staff. More non-members received information from students already enrolled at Iowa State.

Results of this study show that entering Iowa State freshmen in general identify more benefits than drawbacks to learning community participation. Overall, the most commonly perceived benefits are making new friends and being part of a group followed by academic support. Although the aforementioned benefits were also the most common responses for learning community members, a higher percentage of members than non-members identified living near others with similar interests, getting into specific classes, participating in social activities, and living in a particular hall as benefits provided by the learning community experience. Students who had not participated in a learning community perceived academic support to be the primary benefit, followed closely by meeting new friends and being part of a group. Non-members were more likely than members to identify interacting with faculty and upper-division students in their major and earning higher grades or getting into a specific program as benefits. They were also much more likely than members to answer “unsure” or “don’t know.” None of the students surveyed pointed to participation in service activities as a benefit of being part of a learning community.

The most frequently identified benefits of learning community involvement were also the most commonly provided factors influencing learning community members to join. The most commonly identified influential factors in a student’s decision to join a learning community are academic support, meeting new friends, getting into specific classes, and investigating possible majors or careers. The factor ranked as most important in the decision to join, however, is an advisor’s recommendation, followed by academic support, the ability to enroll in specific or “hard to get” courses, a desire to live in a particular hall, and a desire to live near similar students. Just over 17% of those surveyed were required to join a learning community, but this factor was relatively unimportant in their decision-making process.

Among Iowa State freshmen, the perceived drawbacks to learning community involvement vary, but almost 28% reported a belief that there are no negative aspects. Twenty-one percent answered “unsure” or “don’t know.” Following “none” and “unsure,” the most commonly cited drawbacks reported by both members and non-members were not meeting people in other majors

and the perception that learning community participation takes too much time. Negative aspects of learning community participation are, for the most part, perceived to be the same by both members and non-members.

For those student who chose not to become part of a learning community, the most commonly identified influential factors are the perceived time commitment, lack of information about learning communities, and the location of the learning community housing. In contrast, the factors ranked as most important in the decision not to join are lack of openings in their preferred learning community, the time commitment, and the absence or lack of awareness of learning communities relevant to a specific major. Accordingly, at least some of the students who did not participate in a learning community may have joined had there been alternate or additional communities offered.

On average, learning community members report more frequent participation in specific activities related to their academic pursuits than non-members. The most variation between members and non-members was in the frequency with which students reported studying with others—both in formal study groups and informally—and assisting other students with coursework. Members were somewhat more likely than non-members to report more time spent discussing ideas presented in class, making connections between course contents, and participating in hands-on learning. Both groups were virtually equally as likely to attend class unprepared, but non-members reported skipping class at slightly more frequently.

Overall, most of the students surveyed would make the same decision if given the chance to repeat the decision-making process, with the possible exception of those who wanted to join a learning community but were unable to do so.

Appendix A: Items included on the survey

1. Before you started classes last fall, were you aware of the existence of learning communities at Iowa State University?
 - Yes
 - No

[If “no,” move directly to closing script.]

2. How did you receive your information about learning communities at Iowa State? You may list as many ways of receiving information about learning communities at Iowa State as you choose. **[Do not read the items in this list. If you are unsure where a response best fits, choose “other” and enter the response manually.]**

- Brochure or letter
- Iowa State CD-ROM
- Iowa State Web site
- Other Web site
- Student already enrolled at Iowa State
- Other friend
- Family member
- High school counselor/teacher
- Admissions staff member
- Advisor at Iowa State
- Residence Hall staff member
- Other Iowa State faculty/staff member
- Unsure/Don’t know
- Other _____
- Other _____

3. In what ways might a freshman at Iowa State benefit from being part of a learning community? You may list as many benefits as you choose. **[Do NOT read the items in this list. If you are unsure where a response best fits, choose “other” and enter the response manually.]**

- Interacting with faculty
- Making new friends/Being part of a group
- Earning higher grades/Getting into program
- Scheduling classes/Getting into particular classes
- Living in a particular hall/house/association
- Living with or near others with similar interests
- Social activities
- Service activities
- Peer Mentor
- Interacting with upper-division students studying same discipline
- Academic support/Study groups/Review sessions

- Investigate or determine a major or career interest
- Access to specific amenities (like Design Studio space)
- No benefits
- Unsure/Don't know
- Other _____

4. What are the negative aspects that you associate with being part of a learning community? You may list as many negative aspects as you choose. **[Do NOT read the items in this list. If you are unsure where a response best fits, choose "other" and enter the response manually.]**

- Not meeting people in other majors/colleges
- Enrolling in specific or extra courses/Didn't get to pick classes
- Living in a particular hall/house/association
- Takes too much time
- Too hard to change majors
- Extra cost
- No negative aspects
- Unsure/Don't know
- Other _____

5. We are interested in finding out how often you have participated in specific academic-related activities at Iowa State since starting classes last fall. On a scale of 1 to 5, please let me know how often you have participated in each of the following academic-related activities. 1 would indicate that you never participate in the activity and 5 would indicate that you participate in the activity very often. **[Read each item.]**

- Talking with a faculty member or instructor outside of class
1 2 3 4 5
- Skipping class
1 2 3 4 5
- Participating in a formal, organized study groups
1 2 3 4 5
- Getting together with other students to study informally
1 2 3 4 5
- Participating in discussions about ideas presented in class
1 2 3 4 5
- Working on group projects or presentations
1 2 3 4 5
- Assisting other students with coursework
1 2 3 4 5

- Attending class unprepared (such as not doing the reading, etc.)
1 2 3 4 5
- Attending out-of-class lectures or presentations related to course content (not including regularly scheduled lab or discussion sections)
1 2 3 4 5
- Thinking about how ideas covered in one class relate to those covered in other classes
1 2 3 4 5
- Participating in hands-on activities that reinforce concepts covered in class (not including regularly scheduled labs)
1 2 3 4 5

6. Are you now or have you ever been a member of a learning community and/or the Freshman Honors Program at Iowa State University?
- Yes
 - No

[If yes, ask questions 7, 8, 9 and 10 then move to closing script. If no, ask questions 11, 12, and 13 then move to closing script.]

Questions 7, 8, 9, and 10 are ONLY for those who answered “yes” to question 6.

7. Which learning community are (or were) you a member of? Indicate all of the communities of which you are/were a member. For the purposes of this survey, consider the Freshman Honors Program to be a learning community.

[Callers will be provided with a list of learning communities to reference. If the response does not appear on the list, enter the response next to “other” manually.]

8. I will now read a short list of factors that may or may not have influenced your decision to join a learning community. For those factors that played no role in your decision, please indicate “not a factor.” For those factors that impacted your decision to join a learning community, please indicate on a scale of 1 to 5 the importance of each factor. 1 is not important and 5 is very important.

[Read each item. You are asking the student to respond with a number from 1-5 or an answer of “not a factor” for each item. You may read the above statement again if necessary. If students ask you to explain a particular item, tell them that they are free to interpret it however they wish.]

- Required to join a learning community
N/a 1 2 3 4 5
- Wanted to live near other students who are like you
N/a 1 2 3 4 5

- Wanted to live near other students who are not like you
N/a 1 2 3 4 5
- Wanted to live in a particular house/hall/association
N/a 1 2 3 4 5
- Wanted to get into “closed” or hard-to-get classes
N/a 1 2 3 4 5
- Peer Mentor
N/a 1 2 3 4 5
- Academic support
N/a 1 2 3 4 5
- Advisor’s recommendation
N/a 1 2 3 4 5
- Friend’s recommendation
N/a 1 2 3 4 5
- Parent’s recommendation
N/a 1 2 3 4 5
- Wanted to meet new friends quickly
N/a 1 2 3 4 5
- Opportunity to investigate possible major or career
N/a 1 2 3 4 5
- Opportunity to participate in out-of-class activities
N/a 1 2 3 4 5

9. Other than those factors listed here, was there anything else that impacted your decision? If so, what was it? _____

10. If you could relive your freshman year at Iowa State, would you choose to join a learning community again?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe/Unsure

[Closing Script for those who answered “yes” to question 6]

Questions 11, 12, and 13 are ONLY for those who answered “no” to question 6.

11. I will now read a short list of factors that may or may not have influenced your decision not to join a learning community. For those factors that played no role in your decision, please indicate “not a factor.” For those factors that impacted your decision not to join a learning community, please indicate on a scale of 1 to 5 the importance of each factor. 1 is not important and 5 is very important.

[Read each item. You are asking the student to respond with a number from 1-5 or an answer of “not a factor” for each item. You may read the above statement again if necessary. If students ask you to explain a particular item, tell them that they are free to interpret it however they wish.]

- No learning communities for my major
N/a 1 2 3 4 5
- Advisor recommended against it
N/a 1 2 3 4 5
- Friend recommended against it
N/a 1 2 3 4 5
- Parent recommended against it
N/a 1 2 3 4 5
- Location of learning community housing
N/a 1 2 3 4 5
- Did not have enough information about learning communities
N/a 1 2 3 4 5
- Time commitment
N/a 1 2 3 4 5
- Missed deadline to apply
N/a 1 2 3 4 5
- Learning community of choice was full
N/a 1 2 3 4 5

12. Other than those factors listed here, was there anything else that impacted your decision? If so, what was it? _____

13. If you could relive your freshman year at Iowa State, would you choose to join a learning community?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe/Unsure

[Closing Script for those who answered “no” to question 6]

Appendix B: Learning Community Affiliation of Respondents

Table B1: Reported Learning Community Affiliation of Respondents

Learning Community	# of respondents
Freshman Honors Program	23
Business Learning Teams BLTs - College of Business	7
CELTS/CELT (Computer Engineering Learning Team)	7
Design Exchange	6
Undeclared Engineering	5
ACES Agricultural Community Encourages Success	3
Agricultural Business	3
BEST Biology Education Success Teams	3
Mechanical Engineering	3
Animal Ecology - freshman	2
Animal Science-Dairy Science-Pre-Vet	2
Multicultural Learning Community	2
WiSE - Calculus/Chemistry	2
WiSE - Women in Science and Engineering	2
WiSE (Biology/Chemistry)	2
Agronomy	1
Chemical Engineering	1
Cross Cultural Learning Community CCLC	1
Curriculum and Instruction	1
Electrical Engineering	1
Horticulture	1
LEAD (Leadership through Engineering Academic Diversity)	1
WiSE (Math/Chemistry)	1

Appendix C: Additional Responses to Survey Item Twelve

Item eleven asked respondents who reported that they were not current or former members of a learning community to select from a list of factors those that influenced their decision not to join a learning community. Item twelve provided respondents an opportunity to name additional influential factors. Members of the survey team recorded all responses, which are categorized in Table C1.

Table C1: Additional Influential Factors in the Decision Not to Join a Learning Community

Influential Factor	# of respondents
Just didn't want to join a learning community	3
Lack of information about learning communities	3
Wanted to learn on his/her own	1
Wanted a single room	1
Time	1
Taking the wrong classes to be part of a learning community	1
Didn't want to be tied down to anything during first year	1
Living off campus	1
Joined a fraternity	1
Having classes together	1
Wanted to room with someone in another major	1
Felt classes weren't difficult enough to need help with	1
Was undecided and did not like option for undecided students	1