**CSU East Bay** requires all entering freshmen to enroll in a year-long freshmen learning community. We are a commuter campus with a majority minority frosh class - 60% of the freshmen need some level of composition remediation, and; 45% need some level of math remediation. The courses meet General Education requirements and include a frosh success seminar (it is one unit, but totals to three since it’s required each of the three quarters of the regular academic year). So, not exactly requiring a multiple unit first year seminar/student success course, but our variation on the theme.

Fall quarter in the frosh success seminar, we focus on intensive orientation and academic success skills; In winter, we continue that support but focus on career and major exploration, and the spring quarter has a service learning focus. Each freshman learning community is [more or less] integrated by a theme and includes:

- 3 courses [one per quarter] in science, social science &/or humanities,
- a linked public speaking course,
- all levels of composition [developmental and baccalaureate],
- information literacy [taught by campus librarians], and
- the frosh seminar.

Depending on each student’s developmental composition placement and AP credits, the learning community load may be as few as 5 units per quarter. The typical load is 9-units a quarter of learning community classes. We’ve been at it for 7 years and the faculty just voted to continue the program into the future.

**CSU Fullerton** offers five thematic learning communities for first-year students. The foundation of every community is enrollment in pre-selected courses; most satisfy general education requirements, and students often have reserved seats in these courses. Residential life, wilderness as a natural learning environment, summer course work on Math and English skills characterize some of the aspects of these learning communities. Students also engage in service learning and enjoy leadership opportunities through campus clubs and organizations, which are facilitated through linkages to Student Affairs, Associated Students, CSUF, Inc, and the Freshman Programs Student Association.

At **CSU Long Beach**, a variety of freshman learning communities have evolved at the university during the past decade (General Education, Honors, Science/Math, Global). Currently, three-fourths of our entering students (approximately 2800) participate in our paired course models. As a result of our collective efforts, retention and graduation rates have greatly improved over the past five years. This fall, we will pilot theme-based and service learning-based communities and explore adding a residential living/learning component in 2006-07.

**Cal State Los Angeles**’s learning communities are a holistic approach to education in which curriculum and pedagogy are restructured by intentionally linking together course and coursework to provide greater curriculum coherence and opportunities for increased interaction between faculty and students. Learning communities at Los Angeles link two or three courses so that both teachers and students experience a more coherent and enriched teaching and learning environment.

The goal of the linked courses is to create a learning community in which students spend a quarter at CSULA as *one group*. The extended time and contact students experience together lead to academic and social peer support, which in turn contributes to a more engaged learning experience. In addition, increased out-of-class studying time is associated with increased persistence and an overall boost in student satisfaction.

Updated June 2005
A recent example of a successful learning community links the following courses:

- TVF 210: Body Identity in Dance, Theatre, Film (4 units/GE Humanities),
- ENGL 096   Basic Writing II (Utilizing outside reading on Gender and other related articles),
- EDCI 093 Reading Skills ((Utilizing outside reading on Gender and other related articles).

Linking courses and integrating their content, including readings and assignments, and having students take all of the linked courses as a cohort, is a proven method for creating a sense of community among students, and heightening their engagement in the content. The number of learning communities offered at Los Angeles is still limited, but a proposal to substantially expand them is being developed as one of a number of first year experience initiatives.

CSU San Marcos opened its first residence halls (University Village Apartments) in Fall 2003 with the first living-learning community, “The San Marcos Experience”, offered in the 2004/2005 academic year. The San Marcos Experience represents collaboration between First-Year Programs (in Academic Programs), Student and Residential Life (in Student Development Services), the College of Arts and Sciences and Allen and O'Hara (entity that manages University Village).

The curriculum for The San Marcos Experience was modeled after a successful learning community delivered by our EOP unit and the FYE literature that strongly suggests that student success is supported by linking a first-year student seminar with other courses. The San Marcos Experience consisted of a single section of GEL 101 (our first-year student seminar), PSCI 100 (U.S. Government and Politics) and two sections of GEW 101 (Principles of Written Communication). A single cohort of 36 students was block enrolled in the GEL 101 section and the PSCI 100 section. The cohort was then divided into two groups of 18 students for the GEW 101 sections. All 36 students lived together on two floors of the University Village Apartments and the learning community courses (GEL 101, PSCI 100 and GEW 101) were held in the University Village Apartments classroom. Instructors included the First-Year Programs Associate Director (teaching GEL 101), the University Village Faculty-in-Residence (teaching PSCI 100) and two Literature and Writing Studies graduate students (teaching the GEW 101 sections).

“Movements in History,” at CSU Stanislaus links problems in U.S. History, Introduction to Gender Studies, and the Seminar in FYE. The description of the learning community is as follows: See American history and women’s history through events that made a difference. Whether through the physical movements of plants, people, and diseases, the spread of ideas, or the action-packed crusades of dedicated activists, we will explore exciting, non-traditional views of the past.

The faculty attribute the success of the learning community to several factors. Paramount among these was the personal interactions of the three individuals guiding the groups: the two professors and the student peer leader. The courses included small and large group discussion, small and large group projects, and a great deal of reflective writing and sharing. These activities and assignments helped to foster relationships among the students and with the instructors, enhancing the sense of connection and inter-responsibility within the learning community. Students’ positive interactions enhanced not only their academic achievement but also their social bonding. The combination of growing friendships and meaningful course content resulted in a range of positive experiences for the participants.

Updated June 2005