

European First Year Experience 2014

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY LEARNING COMMUNITIES

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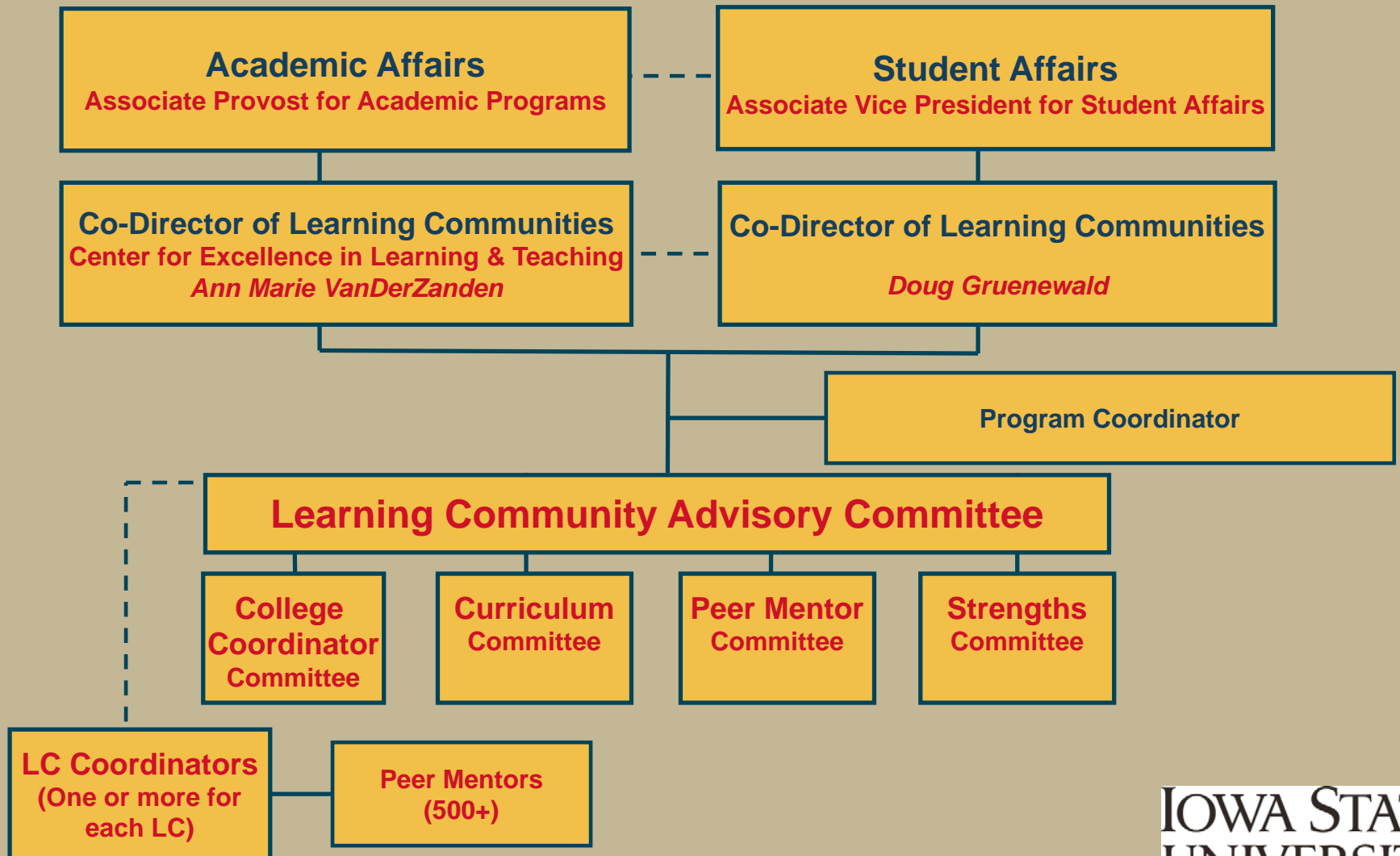
Iowa State University

- Land Grant Research University
- Located in Ames, Iowa, U.S. (pop: 60,000)
- **33,000** students (includes 4700 graduate students)
- **80% white**, 12% non-white, 8% international
- **24.9** mean ACT score
- **90%** of first year students live in residence halls
- **6** Colleges (Engineering, Liberal Arts, Agriculture)
- **100** majors

Learning Communities History

- 1995: **407** students, **12** LCs, volunteers
- 1998-2001: **\$1.5 M** to expand program, develop structure
- 2002: **2,100** students in **46** LCs
- 2013: **5400** students in **80** LCs
- 1995-2014: **50,000** students served

Learning Communities Organization



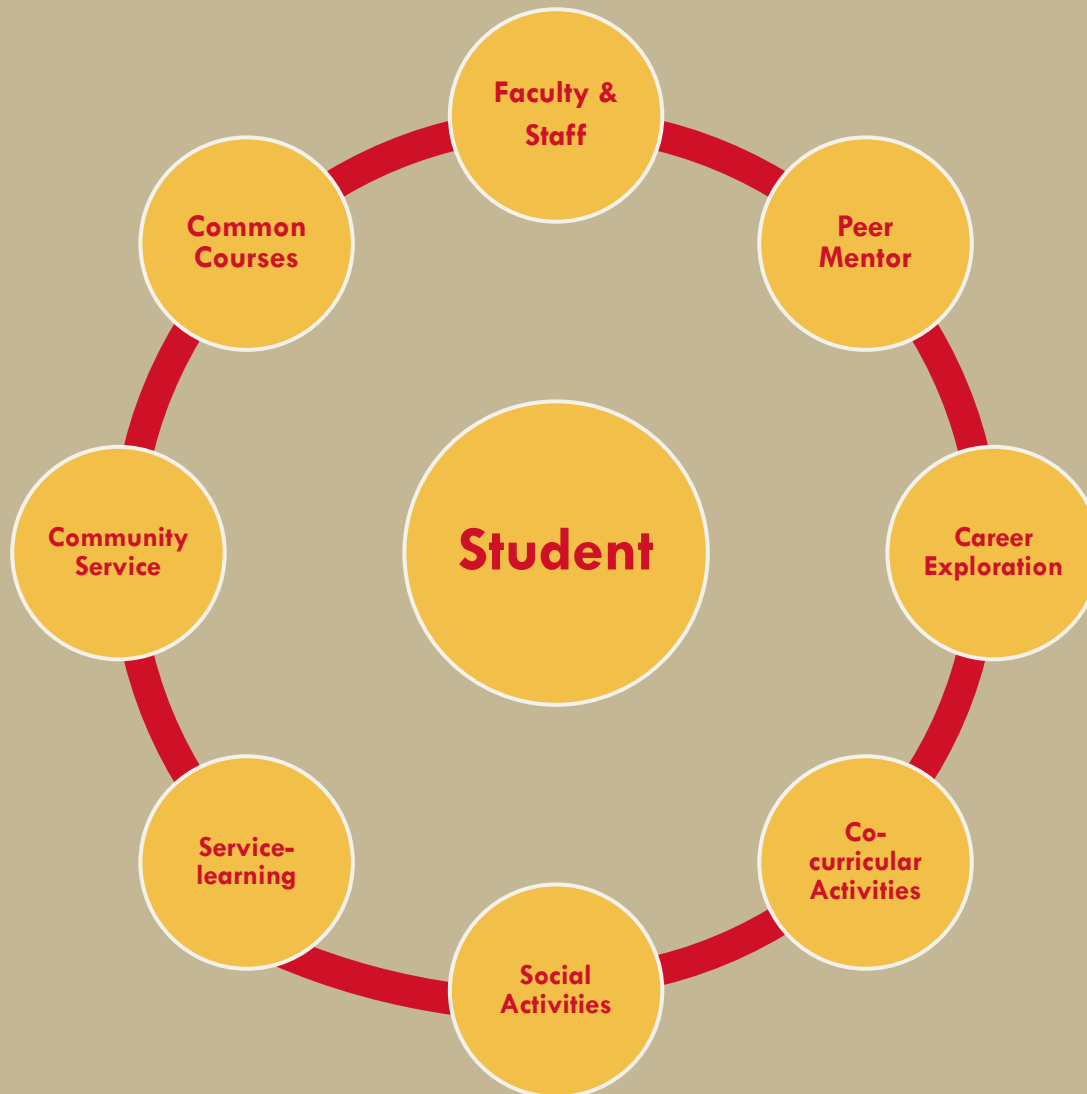
Learning Community Goals

- Develop sense of **belonging**
- Make academic **connections, enrich** learning
- Achieve learning **outcomes** of departments and programs
- Improve **retention and graduation** rates
- Improve student **satisfaction**
- Increase **interactions** among students, faculty, and staff

Typical ISU Learning Community

- **Two or three courses in common**
- **Usually organized by academic advisor**
- **Peer mentors (upper-division students)**
- **Career exploration**
- **Service learning/community service**
- **Social & co-curricular activities**

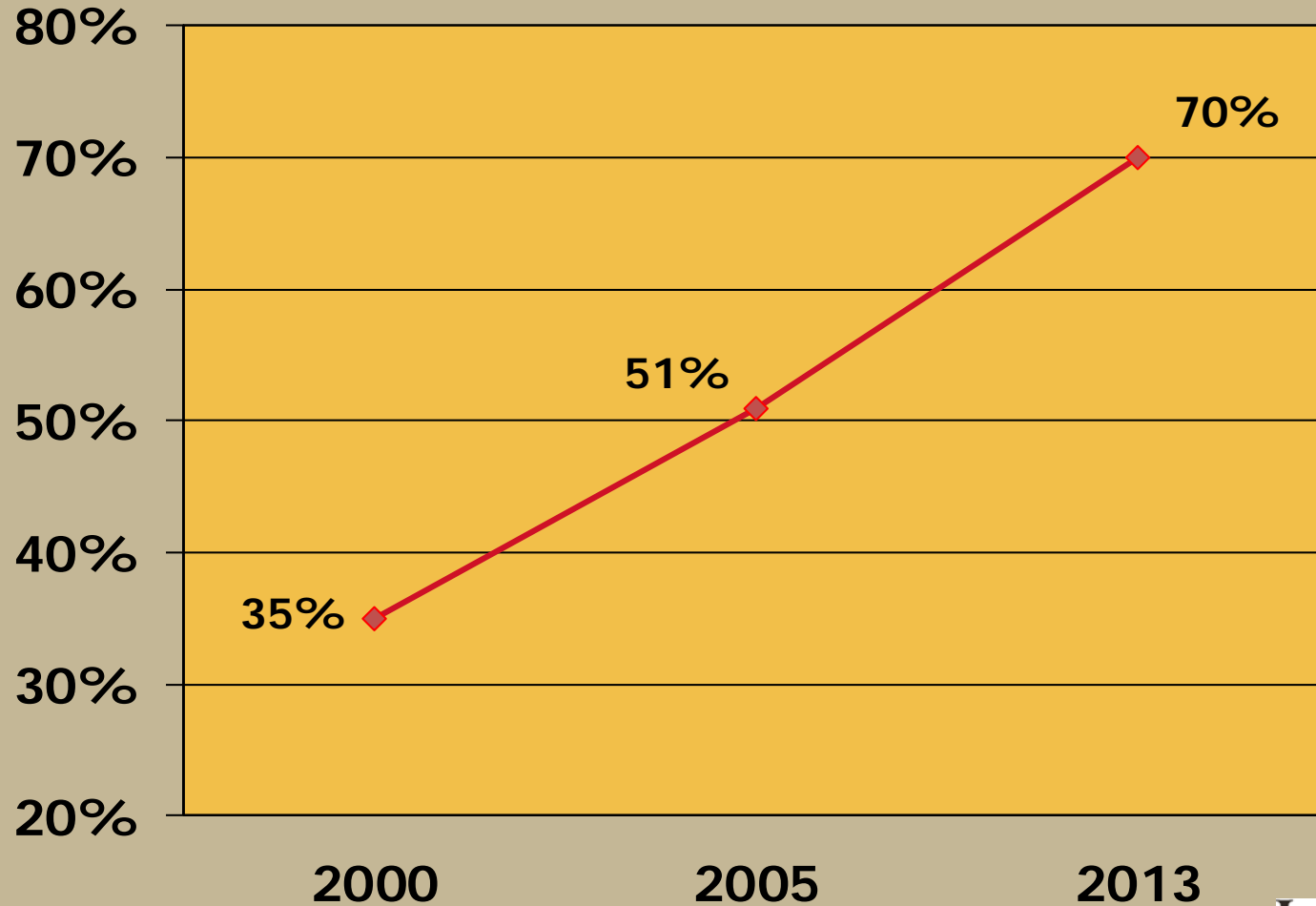
Typical ISU Learning Community



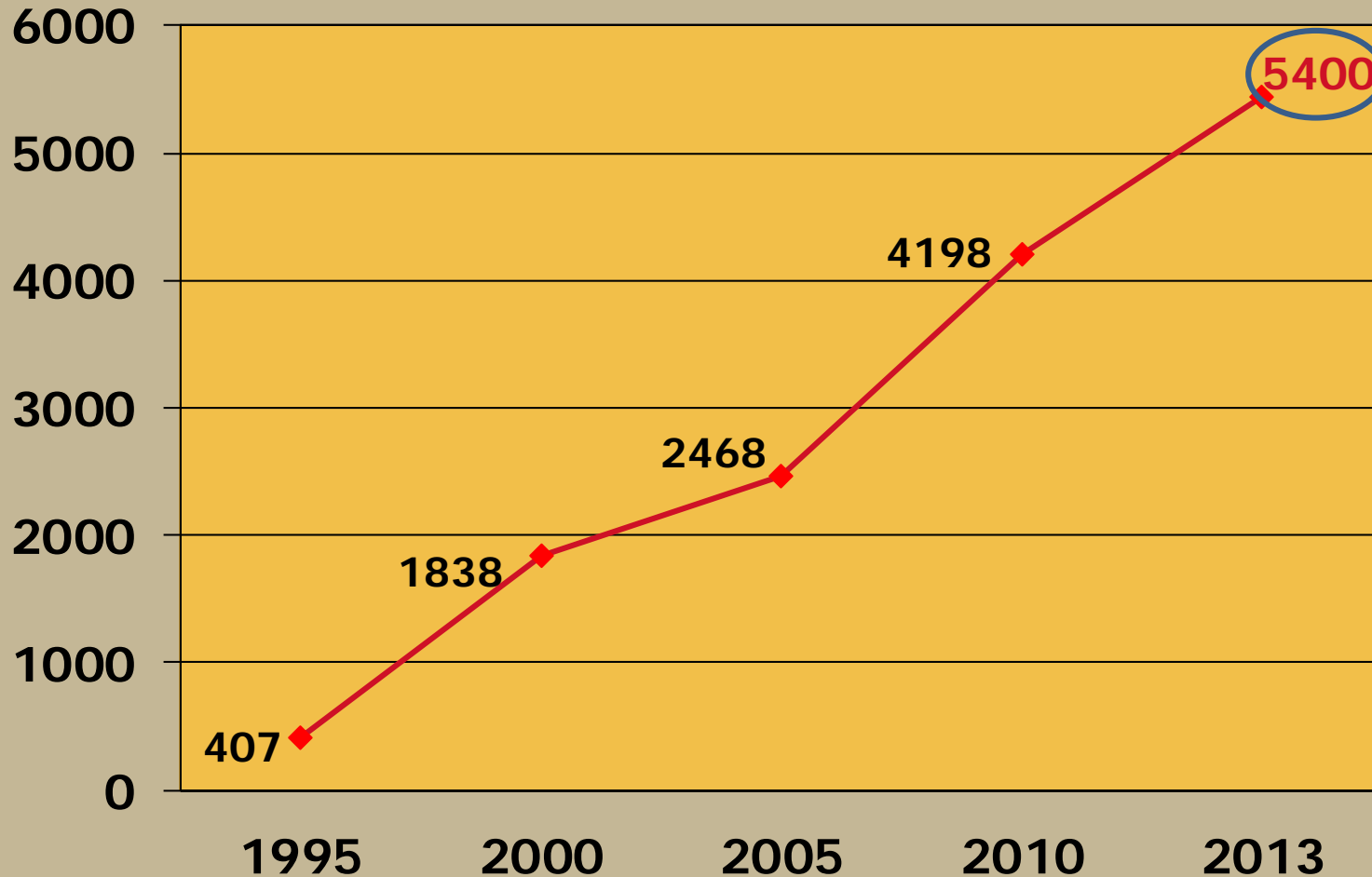
Typical ISU Learning Community

- **Discipline-based**
- **Primarily first year students**
(20% upper-division students)
- **Average size: 30 – 40 students**
(range from 12 – 200)
- **25% have residence cluster**

Percent of First Years in LCs



Total LC Students



Variety of LCs

- **Entrepreneurship (coffee shop)**
- **Design (art field trips)**
- **Biology Education Success Teams**
(Skunk River Navy service learning)
- **Ag BioSystems Engr (Fr.,So.,Jr.)**

Retention and Graduation Rates

Data since 1998:

- Average 1 year retention is 8% higher for LC students than non-LC students
- Average 6 year retention/graduation is 11% higher for LC students than non-LC students
- The program yields over \$5 million per year

Learning Community Students

- Report greater satisfaction with overall quality of instruction and overall experience at Iowa State
- Report more knowledge of university services, their discipline, and career options
- Report higher levels of student engagement and more positive perceptions of campus environment (National Study on Student Engagement)

Learning Community Scholarship

- Iowa State faculty and staff have published more than 50 articles and chapters and made over 140 professional conference presentations
- 19 theses and dissertations on learning communities have originated at Iowa State.

Faculty Comments

- **Dr. Steve Mickelson, Professor of Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering (at ISU since 1982)**
“The learning communities initiative at ISU is, in my opinion, the most meaningful student success program ever developed.”
- **Dr. Gail Nonnecke, Morrill Professor of Horticulture (at ISU since 1987)**
“Learning Communities continually enhance my teaching - they engage and connect me with our students.”

Peer Mentors

- “The student’s peer group is the single most potent source of influence on growth and development during the undergraduate years.”

Alexander Astin, “What Matters in College: Four Critical Years Revisited”

Student Comments

- *“In the Design Exchange Learning Community I made many **strong ties** with student partners and **future professors**. By forming these relationships early, I have been able to benefit from their knowledge and experience. As a **peer mentor**, I will now be in more of a teaching role and will **share and help these students** with my experience.”*

Architecture student

Student Comments

- *“When I came to school, I was entirely alone. I knew absolutely no one. Once I started getting involved with the learning community I felt more **at home** and happy with my surroundings because I had friends in my major, not only students, but teachers as well. I felt like I could ask questions and discover my true self.”*

Vocal Music Education Student

Lessons Learned

- Consider **organizational structure**: one or two people responsible (and with **authority**) to keep things focused
- Define a clear **vision, purpose, outcomes**
- Use **peer mentors**
- **Assess** what you do

More Lessons Learned

- Include **students** whenever possible
- Plan for **continuity** of program
- **Communicate** - share your story
- **Rewards, recognition, and fun**

Future Directions

- **Increase involvement for transfer students, sophomores, and underrepresented groups**
- **Continue to develop learning communities for all interested students**

Questions?



**Please visit the ISU Learning
Communities website at:
www.lc.iastate.edu**