

First-Year Experience Transition Committee Draft Report

March, 2019

DRAFT

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Introduction

Starting in 2015, CU Boulder began an unprecedented period of self-study and self-transformation designed to respond to national changes in higher education and to prepare the campus for further change. Those national changes include the aftermath of the recession of 2007-10, growing public skepticism toward the value of higher education, the rise of digital platforms for educational delivery and desire among American college students to diversify and customize their courses of study (often with an eye toward making them more relevant to work and life beyond the academy), and a collective desire by campus leadership and many faculty and staff to institute change. The initiatives the university has undertaken within this umbrella of self-examination and transformation include:

- A diversity, inclusion and equity strategic plan (2015) that in 2018 became the [Inclusion, Diversity and Excellence in Academics \(IDEA\) Plan](#), designed to promote diversity, improve equity for all people underrepresented in the campus community, and engage the CU Boulder community in continuous reflection and action to support making excellence inclusive at all levels;
- Chancellor Philip P. DiStefano's [Strategic Imperatives](#) (2016) to position the university as a leader in addressing the humanitarian, social and technological challenges of the 21st century by shaping tomorrow's leaders, being the top university for innovation, and positively impacting humanity;
- The [Foundations of Excellence initiative](#) (2017), a campus-wide effort bringing together multiple staff, faculty, and students to evaluate and improve the first year undergraduate experience for all students ;
- The [Academic Futures initiative](#) (2017), a three-year effort to re-imagine and re-invigorate how the university educates students and engages in cutting-edge scholarship and creative work, research and discovery;
- The [Financial Futures initiative](#) (2018), a process of supporting and enhancing the mission of CU Boulder through strategic financial alignment achieved by a university-wide diagnostic analysis, collaborative solution design, and rigorous implementation.

As part of the implementation phase of Foundations of Excellence and in alignment with recommendations from Academic Futures -- specifically, its lead project to [Create a Common Student-Centered Approach to Learning](#) -- Provost Russ Moore established the [First-Year Experience \(FYE\) Transition Committee](#). He charged the committee with assessing recommendations from the Foundations of Excellence Report to (1) change our housing allocation process to allow all students the opportunity to select residence halls and living-learning communities of interest, and (2) coordinate first-year academic experiences across resources/programs/units to ensure that all first-year (FY) students have opportunities for individual connection in a small academic setting. Furthermore, the committee was asked to identify how certain campus operations would be impacted by changes in housing and the current first-year experience on campus.

The FYE Transition Committee also benefited from previous reports, in particular, those from the Residential Campus 2020 Study Group (2006) and the Residential Academic Program (RAP) Task Force

(2017). The Study Group focused on the academic and social benefits provided to students by the RAPs and explored how to expand the program to all incoming students. It recommended a 15-year build-out of new RAPs combined with renovation of residence halls to accommodate spaces for RAP programs and a financial analysis and plan to seek donor and corporate funding for the programs. In response to that report, RAPs increased from 9 in 2006 to 12 in 2018.

The RAP Task Force, which reviewed campus RAPs in AY16/17, raised concerns regarding RAP financing, governance, equity and access. The Task Force recommended an improved governance structure with closer collaboration among the various academic units and Student Affairs. Most important, the Task Force recommended that *“all incoming students [needed] to have access to RAP programs without financial barriers”* and the ability *“to live in any of the three housing complexes without the barrier of paying an extra RAP fee.”*

Early on, the FYE Transition Committee concluded that its goals should include expanding a residential academic experience to all incoming first-year students and making that experience financially accessible to all students. The committee divided into seven subgroups that focused on: academic courses and classroom space, governance structure, programs at other institutions, focus groups, FYE staff, communications, and budget.

This report provides (1) facts on current first-year experiences at CU Boulder and the costs of individual programs; (2) results from focus groups conducted to better understand students’ residential experience and impact of RAP participation; (3) information on residential first-year programs at other institutions; (4) recommendations for a new first-year experience (FYE) for CU Boulder; (5) assessment of the impacts of the new model on the Office of the Registrar, Admissions, Residential Life, current RAP instructors, and the Schools & Colleges; (6) a new Governance structure; and (7) a proposed budget.

Overview of where we are: the first-year experience landscape at CU Boulder

CU Boulder currently offers three kinds of first-year experiences: Residential Academic Programs (RAPs), which commonly include academic courses in the residential hall; Living-Learning Communities (LLCs), which do not include academic courses; and First-Year Seminars (FYSM), which are academic courses outside the residence halls.

Current RAP programs – student numbers, academic programs, funding

- Leeds has two RAPs with 620 students (Table 1). Incoming pre-business (PRBU) students can participate in the PRBU RAP in Williams Village. The Business RAP is on main campus. Demand exceeds the beds available by ~60 students for the Business RAP and ~100 students for the pre-business RAP.
- The College of Media, Communication and Information (CMCI) sponsors one RAP located in the Kittredge area. Most of the 204 students are first-year CMCI students.

- The College of Engineering and Applied Sciences (CEAS) sponsors two RAPs, both in Kittredge. Global Engineering (GEP) has 154 students, and Engineering Honors (EHP) has 208 students. Both RAPs are unusual in having a number of returning, upper class students.
- The College of Arts & Sciences (A&S) sponsors seven RAPs that include ~2300 students, ~95% of whom are first-year students. All A&S RAPs are on main campus.

RAP Personnel

All of the RAPs have a director and program manager/coordinator. With the exception of the two Leeds RAPs, the directors are faculty, who may provide a course(s) to the RAP. A&S also has an associate director (typically a RAP instructor) for each RAP. The RAPs in CEAS and CMCI have faculty-in-residence as do two RAPs in A&S. Leeds also has one academic advisor dedicated to each of its two RAPs, and student peer advisors are also available. The various RAP staff monitor student progress and provide support.

Academic Component

The RAPs provide academic courses to varying degrees (Table 2). Leeds students take all business core courses and some electives in the RAPs in classes of 18-45 students (typically smaller than regular business courses). The CMCI RAP offers 10 courses that include CMCI courses and A&S Gen Ed/CMCI core courses. Courses are taught by CMCI faculty and two RAP instructors or other RAP faculty (A&S courses).

The Global Engineering Program (GEP) Director teaches three RAP courses each year; additional courses are taught by other faculty, primarily from CEAS. EHP students have a required first-semester course with the director (3 sections and 18 recitations taught by upper-division RAP students). Four math courses are available, but not required, each semester. These are taught by instructors in APPM.

A&S RAPs provide ~150 courses each semester (Table 2) taught in the RAP in small sections (<20 students). Courses are taught by instructors and lecturers rostered in the RAPs. Many instructors are shared across several RAPs to provide full course loads.

Table 1. Residential Programs Fall 2018

Residential Program	Beds
PRBU RAP	250
Leeds RAP	370
EHP	208
GEP	154
CMCI RAP	204
A&S RAPs	2,307

Table 2. Courses offered in RAPs - 2018

RAP	Fall 2018 3+ credit courses	Fall 2018 1 credit course	Spr 2018 3+ credit courses	Spr 2018 1 credit course
A&S	157	17	155	13
PRBU	6	5	9	0
GEP	3	0	4	0
HEP			4	0

Engin LLC	495
Traditional Beds	3,057
Commuter	350

RAP Fee

All RAPs charge a fee of \$850. Those funds are supplemented by the colleges to fund RAP academic staff, instruction, operating expenses, and programming (Table 3).

Table 3. RAP funding and uses

RAP	\$850 Fee Uses	College Fund Uses
Leeds	staff salaries, RAP programming	Scholarships, instruction contributed by departments; some programming
CMCI	operating expenses, RAP programming	Director salary, faculty salaries (2-3 courses/semester)
Engineering	RAP programming, program assistant salary, additional courses in GEP	Director salaries, some instruction, operating budget, student hourlies; College subsidizes 50% of the \$850 RAP fee
A&S	RAP instructors, operating expense	Director & associate director stipends, program coordinator salary; CAS provides \$175/student for instructors and operating/programming

A majority of traditional beds (charge no fee) are located in Williams Village (Table 4). Central campus and, especially, Kittredge campus are dominated by beds requiring a RAP or LLC fee. That distribution and fee has raised key questions of equity around the RAP model. First-generation students and students with need-based aid are less likely to live in RAPS and, thus, more likely to live at Williams Village.

Table 4. Current Distribution of Residence Hall Beds by number and percentage

Area Breakdown	RAP Fee \$850	RAP Fee \$850	LLC Fee \$130	Traditional No Fee	Traditional No Fee
Central Campus	1,855	50.4%	13.5%	1327	36.1%
Kittredge Campus	1,402	92.8%	0.0%	109	7.2%
Williams Village	250	13.4%	0.0%	1621	86.6%

Student Characteristics

First-generation students and students with need-based aid are less likely to be in a RAP (Table 5). Two consequences are retention and housing location. After controlling for a number of factors including high school GPA and test scores, financial aid, residency, and entry college, the 2nd fall retention percentage gap between RAP participation and No RAP participation is 3%. Also worth noting is that although ~14% of all first-year residence hall students are first generation, 32% of the students released from the housing requirement are first-gen students.

Table 5. Differences in student characteristics for RAPs and non-RAPs (ODA data)

First-Gen Status	No RAP	RAP	Need Based Aid	No RAP	RAP
Not First Gen	51%	49%	No Need Based Aid	51%	49%
First Gen	64%	36%	Need Based Aid	59%	41%
IPEDS Race/Ethnicity	No RAP	RAP			
AMERIND	52%	48%			
ASIAN	64%	36%			
BLACK	66%	34%			
HISPA	58%	42%			
NON-RES ALIEN	79%	21%			
PACIF	59%	41%			
TWO-PLUS	56%	44%			
UNKNOWN	61%	39%			
WHITE	49%	51%			

Living Learning Communities (LLC)

Engineering oversees Living Learning Communities for ~500 students in four residential halls on main campus (Table 1). Student Affairs oversees four LLCs for 241 students in Hallett Hall with no cost to students. None of the LLCs provide academic courses. Residents of the Engineering LLC pay \$130/academic year to participate. In addition to funding the traditional events that occur within LLCs, the program also provides access within the residence hall to a computer lab that has engineering-specific software and printing.

First-Year Seminars

The first-year seminar program (FYSM) in the Office of Undergraduate Education (OUE) consists of 3-credit hour, academic courses taught by faculty in small (<20 student) sections. FYSMs are available to all first-year students and are not linked to housing. The program has grown to 48 courses with total enrollment of 806 students in Fall 2018. There is no additional cost to students other than their tuition.

Housing Allocations

Housing and Dining Services Occupancy Management (OM) will move to a new structure for the Housing Application/Assignment process for Academic Year 2020-2021. OM intends to eliminate the first-come/first-assign process so that all students can live in a residence hall of their choice. The new randomized assignment process will provide greater access for all students. OM has begun to research other PAC-12 and peer institutions best practices for application and assignment processes. Additionally, OM will engage with campus partners (Admissions, New Student & Family Programs, Institutional Research, Registrar, Faculty, Colleges, Residence Life and Financial Aid) in order to understand how a new housing/application process could potentially affect operations in these areas before finalizing the application/assignment process.

Focus Group Results

From Dec 2018 – Feb 2019, eight focus groups of students and Residence Life staff were conducted to gain a better understanding of students' residential experience and how participation in a RAP may affect this experience. Focus groups were conducted for the following groups:

- Students that participated in a RAP for the 2017-18 school year and are not living in a residence hall this year
- Students that participated in a RAP previously and are Student Ambassadors this year. Ambassadors are students that serve as liaisons between prospective students, parents, and the university.
- Students that lived in a residence hall for the 2017-18 school year but did not participate in a RAP or LLC and are not living in a residence hall this year
- Senior Resident Advisors who are currently working in residence halls
- Hall Directors who are currently working in residence halls

In total, feedback from twenty-six students and five hall directors was collected.

Complete reports of the focus group findings are found in Appendix 1 of this report, but following are some of the key findings:

- Among former RAP students, their experiences with their RAPs were divided depending on how they chose their residence hall:
 - Students who chose their RAP because of their major had a bond with their fellow RAP students and their RAP professors and found the experience overwhelmingly positive for their academic journey.
 - Students who chose their residence hall for location or other factors, but not specifically because of the RAP, did not see the value in having their classes (which they did not want to take) in their hall, felt they were obligated to do so, and may not have connected to their academics at a deep level.
- The student that did not participate in a RAP found the idea of academic programs being offered to all residence hall students appealing. The student felt that taking classes with other students in her residence hall would help build a sense of community.

- Senior Resident Advisors were excited about the prospect of broadening the academic experience to all students in the residence halls, although it was imperative that (1) the classes satisfy a degree requirement for a student’s major and (2) the financial aspect of the program be minimized.
- Hall directors felt that RAP communities currently have some clear advantages over non-RAP communities, such as (1) easier connections to resources, (2) a “safety net” that helps students be successful because of their direct contact with faculty who serve as mentors, and (3) well-designed reinforcements that create variation in a student’s experience. Hall directors felt that creating a unified academic experience in residence halls that is intentional and sequenced appropriately would greatly benefit students that are not in RAP communities.

In addition, two listening sessions with RAP staff and faculty were held in January – February. Those meetings covered a broad range of topics related to the FYE Transition Committee. The committee members who attended the sessions learned a great deal from the conversation and incorporated, as appropriate, into this report.

Review of External Research, Reports, and Programs at Peer Institutions that Inform this Plan

Living-learning communities are high-impact instructional practices designed to connect the social and academic lives of first year college students (e.g., Inkelas, et al., 2008). Analysis of Living-learning communities (LLC) at a range of institutions (Inkelas, et al., 2018) indicates that key elements of a successful LLC include:

- An academic component that includes academic courses (from the LLC or through an academic department) and academic advising
- Assessment of the effectiveness of the program
- Shared decision-making through an advisory board with faculty, associate deans, academic advisors and residence life professionals
- Co-curricular activities that support academic success and social growth. The most effective co-curricular activities include study groups, career workshops, visits to work settings, and service activities.

Various studies emphasize the importance of an academic component in residential communities. Wawrzynski et al. (2010) analyzed 95 living-learning communities and found that students in those with academic courses *“perceived their environments as more enriching and educational and had greater academic interactions with their peers than did students in the combined living–learning communities”* [which lack courses] (p. 209). The NSSE Annual Report (2007) also highlights the value of learning communities in which student cohorts take two or more courses together, whether courses are in the residence hall or not. **These studies indicate that CU Boulder students would benefit from enrollment in two common courses, at least in the first semester.**

If classrooms are not available in residence halls, students in the same residence hall can be offered linked courses in regular classrooms to promote peer-to-peer learning and faculty-student engagement

(Wawrzynski et al., 2010). For example, linked courses are provided by the University of South Carolina through the Common Course program, in which students living in a particular residence hall opt into a 101 seminar linked to an academic course that is typically a core course or popular first-year course in A&S (Lichterman, et al., 2016; Appendix 1). Students select and rank their preferred academic courses, based primarily on academic major or general interests. **Because only some CU Boulder residence halls have classrooms, a new FYE model needs to consider alternative locations.**

Previous research has found that first-year transition seminars (FYS), such as the 101 seminar at the University of South Carolina (USC), have a positive impact on student persistence, performance, and engagement (e.g., Padgett et al., 2013). Transition seminars are typically 1-credit hour courses that help students make the change from high school to college. However, a comparison study of transition seminars to academic-themed FYSs found that, although both kinds of courses produce similar retention results, academic FYS produced gains in academic skills such as critical thinking that were not found with transition seminars (Zerr and Bjerke, 2015). Students found the transition seminars of value for topics and skills related to the college transition. **These outcomes suggest that the CU Boulder FYE model would benefit by linking a CU 101 course with a small-enrollment academic course, which serves as the academic FYS.**

Residential learning communities at the University of Wisconsin Madison (UWM) provide another course model for CU Boulder to consider (Appendix 2). In fall semester, students take a seminar within their community. But spring semester is more flexible with some courses restricted to students in the learning community, some available to students in all learning communities, and a few courses available to all students in the residence halls. **CU Boulder should consider this approach in spring semester as a means of meeting course enrollment targets and providing broader student interactions.**

The other institutions we examined each have several different kinds of living-learning communities, some of which include academic courses and some which do not (Appendix 2). Although difficult to determine the percentage of first-year students in a community with an academic component, the UWM enrolls ~20% of new FY students in “residential learning communities” and an additional 20% in Freshman Interest Groups (FIGS) (without a residential component). Similarly the University of Washington provides non-residential FIGs for ~50% of new students and residential communities with academic programs to ~10% of new students. **CU Boulder RAPs currently provide residential academic programs for similar percentages (~50%) of first-year students.**

A key difference between CU RAPs and residential academic programs at the other institutions in Appendix 2 is the program fee. Students at USC pay an additional fee (\$200) only for faculty-led programs and UWM has an extra fee (\$200-300) only for residential learning communities. **The general absence of a fee means that the learning communities are accessible to all students.**

Recommended Model

We agree with the 2006 Study Group report (p. 1) that a Residential Campus model “*can transform the educational experience for students at the University of Colorado at Boulder*”. The model described here works to achieve that expansion across campus. The committee agrees that:

(a) The best-practice model moving forward is one that allows ALL incoming first year students – those that live in the residence halls and the ~350 students who commute – to participate in a living-learning community.

(b) First Year Academic Experience or “FYAE” is the most appropriate name for the new living-learning communities.

(c) The current RAP fee of \$850 should be ended.

(d) The current confirmation fee of \$200 should be increased to \$325, and that fee should not be refunded but used to help fund the new program and allow all students to be able to participate in the community of their choice.

Overall Considerations

1. The FYAEs reside in one of three residential neighborhoods (all within the “Village” theme) – Williams Village, Kittredge Village, and Central Village. The creation of neighborhoods that include multiple residence halls follows Michigan State University, Elon University, Vanderbilt University, and other institutions (Appendix 2). Traditions that help build a sense of community and identity should be at the neighborhood level in addition to the building level – Elon University provides good examples.
2. Foundational requirements for an FYAE – experiences needed by all FY students
 - Each FYAE provides two **academic** courses for each student – one in the fall and one in the spring semester. Academic courses are intended to launch students for academic success during their first year – the courses are offered in seminar-sized sections (approximately 25 students) and will promote students studying together in the residence hall
 - CU 101 – a 1-credit hour transition course that could be taught by academic advisors, Student Affairs staff, ODECE staff, RAP instructors, FYAE Director, etc. The fall academic course is linked to the CU 101 section (see below).
 - Residential Experience curriculum – linked seamlessly with CU 101
 - Expectation that inclusion, diversity, and equity topics be threaded through CU 101 and co-curricular activities
 - Co-curricular activities: intramural sports, community service, career workshops, education abroad workshops, wellness workshops; leadership opportunities; academic activities such as visits to museums or theatre, student exhibits or performances, etc.
 - Academically Supportive Climate
 - Easy for students to form study groups, promoted by cohorts of students in courses
 - Support programs like tutoring are available
 - Peer support for studying and strong academic performance
3. Additional layers to make FYAEs more robust
 - Summer common reading assignment paired with an activity at Fall Welcome
 - Academic advising
 - Career counseling

- Faculty fellows who participate in FYAE activities such as meetings with students on a regular basis
 - Inclusion of ePortfolios
4. Different ways to create new FYAEs– departments or groups of departments could choose to sponsor a FYAE. The new FYAE Governance Committee (below) reviews proposals by schools and colleges for new FYAE programs.

Academic Component

1. General –
 - The 2006 Study Group (p. 2) emphasized the value of “*seminar size classes (20-25 students per class)*” and ability of students to “*fulfill core requirements and prerequisites for various majors*”.
 - With the large number of FY students, an average of 25 students per course is a sustainable model.
 - Fall semester – every student takes one academic course (see #2 below) and a CU 101 section that is linked to the academic course they want
2. Details of academic courses – How to expand courses currently offered in FYAEs so that all students receive at least one per semester
 - Current RAP Instructors – A&S RAPs taught 312 courses in CY 2018 and contain a group of RAP instructors that can be distributed across more of the new FYAEs to ensure that:
 - instructors with experience with FY students are teaching in the new FYAEs
 - instructors have sufficient courses to teach when course enrollments change to 25 students (currently many RAP courses have enrollments <15)
 - RAPs in CEAS, CMCI, and Leeds also offer academic courses to their students and can accommodate some of the courses required by the new model
 - Courses taught in the current FYSM program are moved to the FYAEs – with an enrollment of 25 students. This could add approximately 60 courses, many taught by tenure track faculty
 - In partnership with the academic departments and schools/colleges, FYAEs could include regular courses that are set aside for a cohort of students from a particular FYAE and taught in a smaller enrollment section (e.g., 25 students). These courses could include:
 - Courses in which FY students have high enrollment numbers (Tables 6, 7); these include: WRTG 1150; MATH 1150, 1300; 2510. Tables 6 and 7 are not meant to represent exhaustive lists. Courses in any subject area are open to consideration, but the focus will be on courses that meet general education requirements and enrollment criteria.
 - Courses normally taught in smaller sections such as PHIL 1000, 1100; ENGL 1991
 - Although we prefer 3-credit hour courses for the FYAEs, recitations of large enrollment courses such as ECON 2010 (Tables 6, 7) should also be considered.

- Inkelas (2017), who reviewed the A&S RAP program, recommended that more courses with a diversity focus be included in RAPs. More first-year diversity courses should be developed and offered in the new FYAE program
 - We expect intellectual diversity among the new FYAEs; however, not every FYAE needs an academic theme. Co-curricular design could drive the theme of a residence hall.
 - Similarly, each FYAE needs to provide academic courses that are appropriate for the academic progress of all students and that are courses typically needed by first-year students (Tables 6, 7). This ensures that, if a student changes major, they do not need to be moved from one residence hall to another during their first year. Instructors are responsible for providing these courses in consultation with RAP Faculty Directors.
- Establishing a CU Boulder common core curriculum would support this goal.**

Table 6 – popular courses for first-time FY students Fall 2018

Course Number	Course Title	Format	# of FY students	% of FY class
ECON2010	Principles of Microeconomics	LEC	1,498	22.4%
WRTG1150	First-Year Writing and Rhetoric	SEM	1,187	17.7%
EBIO1210	General Biology 1	LEC	924	13.8%
PHYS1110	General Physics 1	LEC	807	12.0%
FYSM1000	First Year Seminar	SEM	797	11.9%
PSYC1001	General Psychology	LEC	785	11.7%
APPM1350	Calculus 1 for Engineers	LEC	741	11.1%
CHEM1113	General Chemistry 1	LEC	483	7.2%
MATH1300	Calculus 1	LEC	473	7.1%
MCDB1150	Introduction to Cellular Molecular Biology	LEC	419	6.3%
MATH1150	Precalculus Mathematics	LEC	402	6.0%
MATH2510	Introduction to Statistics	LEC	346	5.2%
SOCY1001	Introduction to Sociology	LEC	237	3.5%
PSCI1101	Introduction to American Politics	LEC	229	3.4%
ENGL1191	Introduction to Creative Writing	SEM	210	3.1%
PHIL 1200	Contemporary Social Problems	LEC	205	3.1%

Table 7 – popular courses for first-time FY students Spring 2019

Course Number	Course Title	Format	# of FY students	% of FY class
ECON2010	Principles of Microeconomics	LEC	1500	22.4%
WRTG1150	First-Year Writing and Rhetoric	SEM	1186	17.7%

EBIO1210	General Biology 1	LEC	923	13.8%
PHYS1110	General Physics 1	LEC	808	12.1%
PSYC1001	General Psychology	LEC	788	11.8%
APPM1350	Calculus 1 for Engineers	LEC	722	10.8%
CHEM1113	General Chemistry 1	LEC	483	7.2%
MATH1300	Calculus 1	LEC	469	7.0%
MCDB1150	Introduction to Cellular Molecular Biology	LEC	418	6.2%
MATH1150	Precalculus Mathematics	LEC	406	6.1%
MATH2510	Introduction to Statistics	LEC	346	5.2%
CHEM1021	Introductory Chemistry	LEC	322	4.8%
SOCY1001	Introduction to Sociology	LEC	239	3.6%
PSCI1101	Introduction to American Politics	LEC	229	3.4%
ENGL1191	Introduction to Creative Writing	SEM	210	3.1%
PHIL1200	Contemporary Social Problems	LEC	205	3.1%

3. Course location –

- Classrooms – FYAEs in residence halls with classrooms have access to courses taught there
- Alternatives for residence halls where classroom space not available:
 - FYAE students could take courses in centrally scheduled classrooms, but be enrolled in a course or section as a cohort from the same residence hall.
 - Data show under-utilization of current RAP classrooms (Table 8). Classrooms not behind locked doors could be made available to FYAEs in other halls in the same neighborhood, which requires central scheduling of classrooms in residence halls
 - Consider allowing access to classrooms behind secured doors to students rostered in classes taught in those spaces.
- Centralize all current RAP classrooms so that classrooms are controlled by the Office of the Registrar during the hours of 8 a.m. -- 5 p.m. There may be departmental or FYAE priorities.

Table 8 – Overall Time utilization - RAP Classrooms

Room Grouping	Spring 2018: 8am--5pm Avg Time Utilization	Fall 2018: 8am--5pm Avg Time Utilization
All RAP classrooms	24.87%	30.11%
RAP Classrooms With One or More Classes Scheduled	37.96%	45.96%
Department Controlled RAP Classrooms Only	37.08%	44.85%
Centrally Controlled RAP Classrooms Only	45.51%	55.42%

4. Course registration – currently, the program coordinator manually registers students into A&S RAP courses. This process consumes staff time that could be redirected to working with students. In the new model:
 - Course registration will be accomplished by the Office of the Registrar in coordination with the FYAE program coordinators. This allows coordinators to spend more time with students in their FYAE.
 - Each FYAE will have funding to offer a sufficient number of courses for the number of students in a particular FYAE.
 - In fall semester, each academic course will be linked to a specific section of CU 101 to ensure that students are placed in cohorts into two courses.
 - The immensity of registering most of the incoming first-year students requires 1.0 new FTE in the Office of the Registrar. The complexity of this process results in the coordination and balance of FYAE courses with those selected by academic departments for first-year student batch registration.
5. Some FY students are enrolled in academic courses offered within a LEAD alliance program such as Miramontes Arts & Sciences Program (MASP) or Student Academic Success Center (SASC). Taking courses linked to their FYAE would be confusing and cause scheduling problems. This problem needs to be addressed.

Impact on Classroom Utilization

The expanded use of residence hall classrooms for FYAE programs and students would result not only in enhanced community building for students within a FYAE, but would increase utilization of instructional spaces on campus. Ideas to explore include:

1. Assigning more General Education/Core and other required first-year courses in the residence hall classrooms in which many residents would need or want to enroll. These determinations must be made in partnership with academic units, particularly in FYAEs that are college/school/discipline-based.
2. Creating a memorandum of understanding that residence hall classrooms are considered centrally-controlled classrooms during the hours of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. This means that the furnishings, technology and other maintenance of them would be centrally managed as well. Beginning at 5 p.m., the usage and scheduling of them would be managed by the FYAE.
3. Opening up access to classrooms that are behind security doors during the hours of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. so that students who don't live in those residence halls can still enroll in FYAE classes being taught there.
4. Determining what renovations or modifications need to be made in the various RAP/FYAE classrooms so they are conducive to broader academic usage. Ensure these projects are budgeted and prioritized with Facilities Management.

FYAE staffing

1. We recommend an overall staffing structure that includes:
 - Buildings grouped by area into three distinct residential neighborhoods. Themes will be developed at the neighborhood and building level.
 - Neighborhood Directors: (3) Central, Kittredge, Williams Village. These are faculty who live in a residence hall.
 - Faculty Directors - We recommend a ratio of 500 students per each faculty director. In this model, some directors will oversee more than a single FYAE, especially if the two are academically aligned.
 - Coordinators: Approximately (1) in each residence hall, 500 to 1 ratio, and, for small (~200 bed) FYAEs, combine program coordinators across several programs.
 - Hire a new position in the Office of the Registrar to coordinate course registration for the new FYAE program.
 - See Appendix 3 for more details on Staffing for Residential Neighborhoods
2. The model for the current A&S RAP instructors needs to be modified. We recommend that all current instructors have 3-year contracts at 100% (unless they desire another percent). Budget for instructor salaries is held in the Provost's office. Those on 100% appointments teach 3+3 courses (70 Teaching/ 20 Service/ 10 Professional Development workload distribution) that are distributed among the residence halls to provide courses as needed by particular FYAE. As part of the teaching load, instructors could also teach CU 101 sections. This central system stabilizes instructor contracts and reduces unnecessary partial contracts and paperwork.
3. Add affiliated faculty or faculty fellows to boost faculty participation but without the need for a stipend. Incentives for faculty fellows could include meal cards, opportunity to teach small enrollment course in the FYAE, ability to interact more closely with first-year students, new incentives determined by campus, etc.

FYE Governance Structure

A campus-wide governing structure is necessary to guide the efficient operations of the FYE Program and to ensure that decisions regarding this student program are aligned with campus mission and resources. In particular, Inkelas et al. (2008) found that collaboration between academic affairs and student affairs practitioners is essential to living-learning communities, and our structure promotes that collaboration. Appendix 4 proposes a new *FYE Governance Committee* to be established.

Timelines, Next Steps, and Communications

1. Following acknowledgment of receipt of the report by the Provost, it should be posted on [the Campus Committees web page](#) for a 30-day comment and review period. Consistent with the review and input processes for the Academic Futures Initiative (and other campus initiatives),

comments can be made on the aforementioned web page through an input form designed by Strategic Relations and Communications; via response papers of no more than two pages also submitted on the web page; and via input sessions that can be requested from April 5 through May 1, 2019 with Mary Kraus and committee co-chair Kevin MacLennan and select members of the committee. In addition, presentations seeking input will be scheduled for April Chairs Breakfast, Deans Council and AVCs Breakfast meetings, and a divisional meeting of Student Affairs.

2. Following this review and input period, the committee will make any necessary additions and modifications and submit the final report to the provost by May 7, 2019. Following a comprehensive review, we recommend the provost should, by Friday, May 17, appoint an implementation committee -- drawn from the FYE Transition Committee plus additional appropriate unit-representation from affected units (similar to the revising committee for the IDEA Plan that followed on the work of the authoring committee).
3. A campus team (up to 8 people) consisting of members of the implementation committee should attend the National Summer Institute on Learning Communities at Evergreen State University (<http://wacenter.evergreen.edu/nsilc>) to be held July 8-11, 2019.
4. Following the Summer Institute, the implementation committee should begin to create a fully working blueprint/implementation plan for a universal First-Year Academic Experience that would commence for all students entering the Fall of 2021. The due date for that document needs to be determined in consultation with the Offices of Admissions and Residence Life.

Conclusion

As we indicated in the introduction to this report, a combination of external factors (changes in the higher education demand landscape among parents and students) and internal activities (self-instituted studies, reforms and calls for change) have provided the backdrop for this committee's proposed plan for instituting a universal First-Year Academic Experience at CU Boulder. The committee has thought both broadly and specifically on the value of FYAEs as a key feature of increased retention of CU Boulder undergraduate students, as a tool in building a more defined and shared sense of community among them, and as a method of more effectively conveying the university's values, traditions and culture to them.

While working together, we also discovered another benefit: that coming together as a campus to transform the first-year experience of CU Boulder students would be the kind of project that could break down barriers between the academic and co-curricular missions of the university. It would bring together, in full and equal partnership, the leaders in both areas whose respective expertise -- and partnership -- is vital for CU Boulder to provide a unique, energized, differentiated first-year, and overall, experience for its students.

In doing this work, we built upon the good work of others. The FYE Transition Committee has worked to address issues raised by the Foundations of Excellence report and earlier RAP Task Force. In particular, this report recommends a new FYE model that can allow all incoming first-year students (even those not living on campus) access to a first-year academic experience without significant financial barriers.

Currently, ~3200 first-year students do not have access to a RAP. If their second fall retention can be raised 3% to match current RAP retention rates, an additional 97 students could be retained -- many of those students being first-generation students. As important, we believe the new model includes components that can promote:

1. Improved student learning and achievement in the first year
2. Increased success rate for under-represented students
3. Improved sense of community within our institution
4. Stronger collaboration among faculty, staff, administration
5. Deeper interaction between the Division of Student Affairs and faculty across campus

We also anticipate that the new model will increase the yield rate for accepted students because parents and students will know that CU is an institution that promotes student success, active learning and intellectual engagement.

Finally, because other large public universities provide living-learning communities for generally no more than half of their incoming first-year students, the proposed model can position CU Boulder as an institutional leader in the first-year experience. This is appropriate, as the campus is dedicated to creating the leaders of tomorrow, being the leading university for innovation, and serving humanity. That process begins in earnest when generations of new students set foot on campus for the first time, seeking to transform themselves and their world. They deserve, from the outset, an experience that itself has been transformed -- carefully considered, conceived and crafted -- to serve their needs and those of a world that needs them.

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First Year Success | Student Ambassador Interview Analysis

Background

A total of 13 students were interviewed in a focus group for this report. The group consisted of RAP students who were recruited to the focus group through their roles as Student Ambassadors. The students represented a variety of majors, RAPs and were composed of students from across the country.

The students pointed to two primary reasons for choosing CU Boulder over the other colleges or universities that interested them:

- The students **found a warm, welcoming community** that other colleges could not replicate. From a welcoming campus tour to a sense of community they felt as soon as they stepped on campus, students said they could feel the positive vibes. Similarly, they mentioned that while CU Boulder is a large school, with a lot of resources and opportunities, they found it felt small and the campus was not overwhelming to navigate.
- For a selection of other students, their **interest in a RAP was a differentiator**. They said it spoke to their interests at the time and they were drawn to the sense of community provided through the RAP.

While they were drawn to CU Boulder because of the sense of community, community also emerged as one of their primary concerns upon coming to CU Boulder.

- Some students were **concerned about finding their own community** whether it was because they were moving from the East Coast or because a large share of their high school class was also enrolled. Others had the perception that the student body may be homogeneous and finding people with similar interests may be difficult.

Housing and Academics

Key Factors when Selecting Housing:

- Location was the driving factor - they wanted to be on main campus in a residence hall.
- Living in a RAP – they wanted to live in a RAP that focused on their interests at the time (i.e. Global Studies), they wanted a challenge (Honors) or they wanted it to bolster their academic experience (Global Engineering; Leeds).
- Word-of-mouth – they heard good things about certain residence halls from family and friends and based their priorities on those recommendations.
- Friends – some prioritized living with a friend or someone they met online after confirming their enrollment.

Academic concerns:

- Rigor – some underestimated how difficult CU Boulder could be, especially some of the introductory courses, because of their own perceptions of rigor and competitiveness.

Appendix 1

- Lack of connections with professors – some assumed they would be in mostly large, intimidating lectures where they would be “just a number” and not have a personal connection with their professors.

How their RAP helped inoculate against these concerns:

- They found that having a RAP was reassuring that they have a built-in community and helped them branch out and meet new people.
- They found the RAP classes showed them there were smaller courses and not everything is a large lecture hall.
- Because of the small classes and having their professor in their residence halls, RAPs helped them forge connections (and resources) that will be there for their first year and beyond.

Role of RAP to the integration of academic resources:

- They were quick to point to the comradery they had with their RAP classmates. They liked the idea of working on problems or homework with those who lived down the hall and often found themselves learning from one another or bouncing ideas off each other.
- One student said he sees firsthand as an R.A. the disconnect between his students who are not in a RAP and his own experience in a RAP when it comes to connecting with academic resources.

When discussing their ideal experience of academic support in the residence halls, they generally pointed to the foundational aspects of RAPS.

- RAP professors who were a constant resource who really cared for their students.
- RAP professors who held office hours in their residence halls.
- Class spaces within the residence halls that were ideal for study groups as well as the convenience of having your classes in such close proximity.

Additional **benefits** that students gain being in a RAP:

- Helps students stay focused on their academics by forming strong habits like making use of office hours or making sure they attend each class.

Drawbacks to being in a RAP

- Depending on their RAP and their experience, some found the extra expense was hard to justify because they did not see the benefits or were able to utilize the offerings like social events. This tended to be true among those who were in a RAP because they chose the residence hall for other reasons.
- They would be in a “bubble” because they would only be exposed to people with similar interests and they would have a harder time to get exposed to the breadth of students (and their intrinsic interests) across campus.
- Some found the number of RAP courses were limited and they felt they did not have enough courses to choose from – again, especially true for those without an academic or interest-connection to their RAP.

Appendix 1

To build a better model for RAPs, the following themes emerged:

- Communication: They generally felt that the value and benefits of living in a RAP were not promoted enough or that they focused too much on having a class in your residence hall. They described the RAPs as lacking an identity to many students.
- Cross-RAP experience: They also wanted to see more cross-RAP activities (again, to help them branch out from their own RAP) and even include two RAPs in one residence hall.

RAP students were divided when probed about the importance of having their classes within their residence hall.

- Maintain this aspect: One of the main selling points for him/her and were drawn to “going to class in my pajamas.”
- Open to changing this aspect: It could help provide more courses and give students more choices. They also thought this could help provide better physical spaces for courses. Others thought it could help them meet people from outside their dorm.

Broadening the Academic Experience in the Residence Halls

Initial thoughts: Given their mostly positive experience with their RAPs and the academic foundation established through them, they found this was a good idea that could benefit a lot of students who may not have exposure to learning communities.

Benefits:

- Brings more unity to a residence hall and fosters to students to meet like-minded students who they may not have otherwise.
- It broadens students' horizons both academically and socially.
- Helps provide structure to first year students – something with which they often struggle.
- See the impact this could have on retention of first-year students.

Concerns:

- If everyone is in a learning community, do they lose their appeal as being special.
- People may pick their residence hall randomly and those students could water down the connections others may have to their RAP or learning community.
- The benefit and selling-point of small class sizes could be diminished.
- The additional cost of being in a RAP being imposed on each student
 - Though some noted this fee could be rolled into the housing fee to help offset those concerns of additional costs.

Key Takeaways

Finding a welcoming community was very important to students when choosing to come to CU Boulder and upon arriving on campus. Student involvement in a RAP provided them a community of like-minded students that made a large campus feel much smaller. Their RAPs were able to further bolster their sense of community by providing intimate relationships with professors who then became key resources to them as first-year students – when they needed it the most. Academically, they found their small classes, conveniently located in their residence hall set them up for success particularly in what they perceived to be their difficult, introductory courses. Further bolstering their academic success, they felt they were more connected to CU Boulder’s academic resources and enjoyed learning from and working with their hallmates.

The smaller share of students who did not have these same, positive experiences with their RAP were not generally connected to it through their major or interest – instead they felt it was just an add-on to the dorm that was their choice because of its location or reputation.

- One student summed this up as, “You are all saying, ‘I’m in a RAP!’ Whereas my experience was, *‘I’m in a RAP??’*”

They want to ensure others have these opportunities for social and academic support so they wanted to expand the communication about RAPs to prospective students and their parents. They thought the idea of broadening the academic experience in the residence halls could be transformative for many students – as long as the foundational elements of a community and small, conveniently located classes are not diminished.

Background

A total of five Hall Directors were interviewed for this report. This group consisted of Hall Directors who currently support residence halls that include RAPs or LLCs, and those that do not include either type of program. All of the Hall Directors (HD) that were interviewed for this focus group had been an RA themselves, at times experiencing both positive and not so positive interactions with their own hall director. Most had a traditional path to getting involved in Residence Life; including attending graduate school to obtain a master's degree.

Hall Directors felt the residence halls played the following role in a student's academic success:

- **Support student with their path to involvement and using resources** such as ASAP tutoring, finding people to do homework with, etc. One HD who works in a RAP community mentioned that students have to actively choose not to use extra support because it is so readily available to them.
- **Helping provide accountability for students who are becoming adults.** For some HD, they mentioned that might include helping students become better citizens and personal growth, and the value of role models in the halls.
- **Physical location of halls** - provides a home base, as well as the close proximity to campus, and can be provide a place to study.
- **Connection** to others, including HD, RAP Director, Faculty, other students who can help normalize the struggle. Specifically, one HD mentioned meeting with 'vulnerable' students and supporting them in academics and making connections. A HD also mentioned this relationship-focused philosophy can help to individualize the student experience.

Role the HD play in student academic success:

- Provide a holistic consideration of student experience. HD felt that conversations tended to come back around to academics, even in conduct situations. HD can help students make connections between ideas/ experiences/ etc.
- Help students build skills – with personal experience, connections to others, and sharing knowledge. For one HD, this was described as helping students to build competencies outside of the classroom.
- Direct academic support if in a non-RAP hall. Create spaces and direct support structures that help students.

Housing and Academics

Ideal Experience to Support Student Transition. The following key themes emerged:

- Focus on relationship building
 - Significant emphasis on the ability to feel welcome, and having open communication with roommate and floor
- Intentionality of programming (move-in, timing)
 - Finding the right amount of time for move in because one HD thought it was too long. Additionally, they would value a shorter experience.
- Intentionality with physical environment

Appendix 1

- Study spaces and having one room versus multiple.
- Engagement with faculty and other academic resources
 - Partner with academic advisors in the hall, and faculty engagement. In a non-RAP space, it is hard to build a relationship if they are not available.
- Creating experiences for different types of students
 - Programming with a New Student Success Series type of program. Providing information in a trickle instead of fire hose.
 - Support staff (RA, CA, etc.) are important to supporting involvement.
 - Considering student needs like introverts versus extroverts.

Academic Supports for Students in Residence Halls

- Top responses include the following (these supports came up more than once): **CAPS, ASAP tutoring, faculty liaison, or a faculty in residence.**
- These responses also came up: support for specific populations, i.e. first generation students, peer mentor that is not an RA to help with academics, FYE course taught in the hall, and academic advising.

Benefits that students gain by being in RAP

- Connection to professor, other students, Hall Director. Also described as comradery by a HD. One HD did mention having the opportunity to connection in this way with professors can help individuals who identify as introverts.
- Gateway to getting information about other things, including career exploration, sharing interest with others, common experiences that help to build community,
- Location benefits include taking a class in your hall.
- Academic experience, potentially have a higher GPA, and it makes it more challenging to skip a class because people will notice. Experiencing areas and aspirations that someone maybe not have thought of before.
- Identify development as a result of participation.

Drawbacks to being in a RAP

- Cost of being in a RAP – halls are already expensive and this might not help with equity for all populations of students.
- Culture can be challenging if students find the focus is not for them. Can create feelings of isolation and being an outsider. Potentially be a high pressure situation, leading to mental health concerns. Additionally, one HD suggested there might be the chance of increased 'drama' (i.e. conflict) when people live in RAP environments.
- Finding connections outside of RAP. Diversifying support networks, and how do they build new connections if they decide to move away from RAP.

Transition support for academic and social

- Provide an ethic of care and support the dual academic/ social needs of students.
- Primary skills first year students need to learn:
 - Time management (multiple responses), coping skills, being a person first, and good decision-making skills.

Advice would you give an admitted student on selecting

- Primary suggestion: Do your research and understand what you are looking for in your first year, and know what you want to accomplish while you are here.

Appendix 1

- After consider these question, try not to focus on what parents, family, friends want them to pick.
- Try not to focus too much on just the aesthetics, such as A/C, or closeness of building to classes.
- Finding what fits best for you, not just because of friends.
- Other advice: review housing website and be prepared to create your own experience regardless of where you end up, and lastly be flexible. Also, determine areas the student is passionate.

Supporting students outside the Residence Halls to ensure academic success

- Tricky, but generally finding a way to provide access to students through a FYE class, newsletter or already existing events. Finding a way to collaborate with other units to provide useful connections to aid students in tasks such as registering for classes, etc.
- Consider the impact of transportation and housing. Possibly inviting these students to programs and making sure they have access to resources. Make sure they feel like they have a place to go when they have a gap in between their classes.

Collaborations and Support

- Support and resources needed to create a residential experience to support academic success for all students
 - Financial support – including scholarships, payment plans, and paying for housing.
 - Building connections with partners, including Career Services and tutoring.
 - Physical spaces that are needed for students' academic needs.
- Level of collaboration with faculty members and other departments
 - Need to have a level of respect, and understanding of the role of each.
 - Conflict over resources, etc. can cause clear disconnect between RAPs and others. Relationships can potentially be built by inviting RAP folks to Res Life meetings and expanding this type of support to all students, not just some.
 - Physically being present in the halls.
 - Follow through we support for students and using a common language when helping students bridge the gap between academics and social environment.

Broadening the Academic Experience in the Residence Halls

Initial thoughts: good opportunity that needs to be created with intentionality and consideration of specific population needs.

Benefits

- Key points:
 - Equalizer for all students. Experience does not depend on talent or money, but helps to create equity in the halls.
 - Reassuring to parents and families, a good opportunity to market the experience.
 - Creates a safe and comfortable environment during a significant transition.

Concerns

- Failing students who we already tend to fail. Consider how we structure this type of experience to ensure accessibility and accountability.

Appendix 1

- Getting student staff onboard with process. Try not to push something onto students that do not meet their needs.
- Connecting the first year with the larger four-year experience.
- Pushing students into something that they may not want to spend their time doing.

Improvements

- Learning environment – standardized experience with academic focus will lead to improvements.
- Retention – connection and academic success leads to retention. Having a positive experience, especially supporting students' safety in the first few weeks is great, and can improve the likelihood that a student will stay. When you also feel connected, it makes it easier to learn and grow.
- Focus on first weeks in school are critical.

Supports, resources, and collaborations

- Shared vision - need to be on the same page with spaces and financial resources.
- Better academic partnerships to increase buy-in. These should work hand-in-hand, and try to complement each other.

Final thoughts

- HD one hundred percent support a First Year Experience Course.
- Getting all partners working toward the same vision, helping students be successful.

Key Takeaways

Supporting connections between peers, Hall Director, faculty, and other stakeholders is important no matter the program. We need to provide an intentionally designed process for students to connect with resources they will need in order to be successful. Resources that should be provided include CAPS, tutoring, Career Services.

- RAP/ LLC programs have this built in; in programs without them, it seems to lie solely with the Hall Director.

The safety net that is created within RAP/ LLC communities does not necessarily exist in non-RAP halls. This net helps students be successful because they have direct contact with faculty who serve as mentors. Additionally, the well-designed reinforcements that are consistently available to RAP/ LLC students creates variation in a student's experience. Creating a unified experience that is intentional and sequenced appropriately would greatly benefit students who are not in structured RAP/ LLC halls.

Provide support or resources that students need to be successful including financial support, opportunity to build community and connections with others, and physical spaces that support their needs.

First Year Success/Resident Advisor Interview Analysis

Background

A total of six RAs were selected to interview for this report. Four RAs were present to be interviewed. All RAs were Senior RAs and represented communities with RAPs, LLCs and traditional communities. Three of the four RAs interviewed had participated in a RAP the one RA that did not participate in a RAP program and was an international student.

Choosing CU:

Academic Resources did you find most helpful:

- **Advising was mentioned by all RAs** to be a resource that they found helpful. However, the quality of advising varied by major. Core courses and a clear advising map made advising in engineering easier to navigate. Other colleges without this map was a source of frustration for those RAs with majors outside of engineering..
- Faculty office hours were also cite as being helpful academic resources for RAs.
- RAs identified having classes with students they lived with as beneficial for study help and community building.

RAs reported choosing CU for a variety of reasons:

- Siblings attend CU, Scholarships, acceptance into a RAP

Satisfaction with Housing:

- Facilities were viewed as important
 - Housing experiences ranged
 - New builds: Williams Village North
 - Older buildings: Quad, Stearns
 - Renovation Kittredge.
- **Community** that was formed within the halls was a common theme and reported as **very important amongst RAs**.
- RAs with RAPs felt very supported in their academic support. RAs without RAPs found academic help from other students.

Role as an RA:

- RAs stated that the desire to become an RA is tied to the experience their own RA provided.
- **Financial support** being an RA provided was also a strong consideration in the desire to become an RA.
- RAs reported wanting to be a resource to other students as a reason for applying to be an RA.
- The RA experience was generally positive.

Appendix 1

- Time management was described as a challenge. The Hall Director was also identified as an influence on the RA experience both positive and negative.
- RAs provided academic support to students by:
 - Connect students to resources: ASAP, Connect with professors; introducing students to others with the same major, mentoring students on which classes to register for.

Housing and Academics:

Ideal Experience:

- Combination of having a RAP and integrating with ResLife and RAs.
- Having the ability to meet others within the same class.
- RAs that were in the RAP also allowed for mentorship.
- Meeting professors after hours, being able to connect with other students in the same class
- Having multiple students with the same major living in close proximity to study for exams.

Support:

- **Having smaller classes in the hall would be a big draw.**
- Having an advisor within the halls would be useful.

What do RAPs offer:

- **Community was mentioned several times.**
- Assistance transitioning from high school to the larger classes in college.
- Access to faculty; upperclassman mentorship

Drawbacks:

- RAPs lack structure when mapping classes into the major
- Students taking the same class had different experiences.
- Social pressure from other students when not academically performing well due to everyone taking the same classes.

Advice:

- Visit as many buildings that you can.
- Wished there were people to talk to about their experience. **Specifically desired a student forum to talk about the “real” experience in the halls.**
 - Felt that professional staff presented to families and not the student

Support:

- **All RAs referenced providing resources to residents about moving off campus.**

Broadening Academic Experience:

- **RAs liked the idea of broadening the academic experience to all students.**
- Would like to have the option to choose the experience or not.

Appendix 1

- **Having the classes offered meet the requirement of the degree was very important.**

Concerns:

- **Financial component of a RAP is a concern amongst the group.**

Key Takeaways

RAs overall were excited about the prospect of broadening the academic experience to all residents. Specifically, having small classes with students on the same floor with faculty in the building is seen as a plus. The financial component of the program was a concern to RAs. RAs indicated that having classes in the program that satisfied major specific requirements was imperative. RAs believed that the community that is created by RAPs is a positive contribution and was mentioned in several instances. RAs stated having advisors within the hall is a need. Students are relying on other students and RAs when they feel their advisor is not providing quality assistance.

First Year Success | RAP Student Interview Analysis

Background

A total of 8 students were interviewed across four separate focus group sessions for this report. The students were all sophomores who left their RAP after their first year. The students represented a variety of majors, RAPs and were composed of both in-state and out of state students.

Students considered several factors when deciding to come to CU:

- Many students reported that the **campus's location, culture and aesthetics** were some of the primary reasons for their choice. Specifically, they mentioned the proximity to the outdoors and skiing as well as the opportunities Denver provides.
- The **breadth of opportunities** a large university provides was another differentiator both in terms of clubs, organizations and events as well as the academic offerings and specific majors and programs.
- The **cost of tuition** was also a significant factor. In-state students reported that the in-state tuition was a large draw and ultimately led them to CU Boulder.

In their transitions to CU Boulder, students referred to several key considerations and the role their RAP played:

- Anxiety finding their own social community:
 - Some students felt as though the RAP program helped them through the transition by providing a built-in, small circle of people who shared academic interests.
- Academic transition from high school to college:
 - Students expressed concern about handling their course loads, succeeding in large lecture classes and finding structure and a routine.
 - Many students felt as though their RAP experience made this transition more manageable, specifically mentioning the smaller class sizes, access and relationships with professors and a shared academic community.
- Where the RAPs fell short in easing the transition:
 - Some students did feel as though the RAP was just another obligation that they needed to fulfill during their freshman year. Students were disappointed in the limited number of RAP courses that were available.
 - Others felt as though the community was too small and siloed, not very supportive academically or did not meet their expectations of what their RAP would offer.

Academics and Housing

Key Factors when Selecting Housing

- Location of the residence hall and proximity to central campus was the most frequently considered factor.
 - Some students wanted to be on main campus. Some students, living in Kittredge for example, valued having some distance between their hall and their classes.

Appendix 1

- Condition of the building was also mentioned frequently.
 - Some students indicated that they picked residence halls with RAP programs because they were newer or in better condition than others. The lack of air-conditioning in several of the residence halls was often mentioned.
- The presence of a RAP was mentioned but at a lower frequency than location and building-condition.
 - For those that prioritized a RAP, they indicated that the driving considerations were the ability to have classes in the dorm, networking opportunities within the community and a more serious academic setting with fewer distractions.
 - Among those interviewed, students mentioned their intentional choice of the Health Profession and Leeds RAPs, specifically.
 - Importantly, these students' connections to their RAP was far stronger than others.

Students mentioned a variety of sources they used for academic support both inside and outside their RAPs.

- Within the RAP: Students specifically cited office hours in the residence halls, shared study and community spaces, working with other students who bring different perspectives to the same problems and, again, the classes within their residence halls.
- Outside of the RAP: Students relied on their academic advisors, peer mentoring (specifically that offered through Leeds) and ASAP and CAP sessions.

Benefits of living in a RAP:

- Classes and office hours in the dorm, a community of like-minded people, closer relationships with professors, community events (and being incentivized for attending them), and perks like food/candy.
- The benefits of classes in the dorm extend beyond just convenience to the students.
 - They allow for small classes and those allow for more conversation and a better relationship with classmates and the professor.
 - Group projects are easy because everyone is together.

Drawbacks of living in a RAP:

- Classes in the dorm make it hard to disconnect from classes.
- Classes offered through RAP are required but felt forced and often did not meet students' needed requirements.
- The extra cost associated with a RAP.
- Programming and events did not meet expectations – they happened too infrequently and were sometimes poorly planned or did not appeal to the students.
- A lack of standards across RAP residence halls

The requirements and benefits of belonging to a RAP should be clearly communicated.

- Many students were unaware of the requirement to take classes in the dorm.
- Clarity in the classes offered and how they work with students' academic requirements

Broadening the Academic Experience in the Residence Halls

The suggestion to make RAPs and other learning communities mandatory for all first-year students was met with skepticism.

- Students felt as though housing should be a choice and mentioned the possibility of students resenting that independence being taken from them.
- Students do not want to be forced to take a class within their dorm – especially if it is disconnected to their academics or interests.
- Students do not want to be forced to pay the RAP fee.
- Students felt that all should have the opportunity to be in a RAP, but that an opt-out option needs to exist.

Improvements to learning environments included:

- Because location is such a draw of certain residence halls, they suggested not to put RAPs all on main campus
 - They specifically mentioned how Farrand should not be part of a RAP because of its large draw because of its location and reputation for being a fun hall.
- Hone in on singular focuses more like Leeds or the Health Professions to make sure there is an identity and to avoid students without that interest being in the residence hall and watering down that experience
- Ensure RAP classes are applicable to the major because students benefit from the small class sizes and close relationships with professors

Key Takeaways

Among this group of former RAP students, their experiences with their RAPs were divided clearly down the line of how they chose their residence hall. Students who chose their RAP because of their major (Leeds and Health Professions) had a bond with their RAP, their RAP professors and found the experience overwhelming positive to their academic journey. Those who chose their residence halls for location or other factors, but not specifically because of the RAP, did not see the value in having their classes (which they did not want to take) in their hall, felt they were obligated to do so and may not have connected to their academics at that deep of a level.

The experiences in the RAPs often differed to the point where they were looking for standards in which all RAPs would be held. Some students found that what they were promised as part of their RAP didn't meet reality because there were few events scheduled or they did not have a sense of community.

- This was often discussed among the students in the Honors RAP. Those in the Leeds RAP, however, raved about the professional networking events held each week, their peer mentors and the applicable academic experience.

The students, driven by their sense of feeling obligated to take RAP courses and their need to maintain control over their course selection, were more skeptical about the proposed change to put all first-year students in a structured, learning environment.

First Year Success/Traditional Student Interview Analysis

Background

A targeted recruitment approach was utilized for the traditional student focus group. An initial outreach was sent to 20 students via email. The 20 students consisted of 10 ARSC, 4 BUSN, 4 ENGR, and 2 CMCI. Within these groups, there was representation across residence hall neighborhoods, gender, ethnicity, first gen and Pell/Stafford. An incentive of \$25 was offered to students that completed the focus group. Eight students indicated they would attend the two focus groups and reminder emails were sent prior to the day the focus group occurred. Of this initial outreach, zero students attended the two focus groups offered. A second outreach to an additional 200 "traditional housing" students from spring 2018 was sent out via email. The same sign up and reminder procedure was utilized for the second group of students. Three students signed up for the first interview one attended and two students signed up for the second interview, zero attended. The interviewer asked the participating student why they believed there was low attendance. The student stated that they were unaware of who the Provost was and believed that other students were unaware of who they were as well. **“Special Invitation from the Provost”** was utilized in the subject line of the outreach emails. The participant also indicated that some students may have believed the email was spam.

Choosing CU:

Experience at CU:

- Participant stated that she applied late to CU and was placed in Darley.
- Had a close friend that lived in Baker and saw the disparity in experiences the two experienced.
 - Participant felt frustrated that she did not have an experience similar to her friend which was disappointing.

Participant chose CU for the proximity to her home.

- Researched CU and saw that Williams Village had a 10% lower retention rate.
- Felt like only main campus had RAP programs.

Housing Preferences:

- Applied late to CU and did not have the option to live anywhere else on campus.
- Felt that the facilities in Darley were lacking. Having an old building did not make her feel welcome.
- **Stated that the RA was not involved on the floor and was not happy about living in Williams Village.**
 - RA’s negative outlook had an impact on her experience.

Appendix 1

Housing and Academics:

Ideal Experience:

- Grouping students by major or minor.
 - Important so students could collaborate socially.
 - Students could be hands on and guide one another.
 - Students could assist with studying.

What do RAPs offer:

- Basis for community pairing students with similar interests.
- Friends in class and a support system.

Advice:

- **Apply Early.**
 - **Felt applying late had a negative impact on ability to join a RAP.**
 - Williams Village has a stigma that no one wants to live there.
- Would tell other students to join a lot of things.
 - Be opened minded.
 - Attend lots of organizations meetings.
 - Follow through and do not let interests fall through.

Broadening Academic Experience:

- Participant believed it would if everyone had the ability to join an academic program.
 - Everyone could use small classes for transition and create positive academic habits.
 - There is a lot of possibility for networking due to students taking classes with those they live with.
 - Feels that community based programs would boost GPA.
 - Would deepen the appreciation of the topical area of the community.
 - Connection to class

Concerns:

- What would happen to those students that were not interested in the program they were in?
- Fee associated with our current programs.

Key Takeaways:

The participant of this focus group felt negatively impacted by late registration and living in Williams Village. Having a close friend in a RAP, specifically Baker accentuated her feeling that she was not getting the same experience. Participant is really open to the idea that academic programs could be offered to all students. Likes the concept of taking class with those she lives with and would help her build community. Negative RA experience impacted her living situation.

Appendix 2. Characteristics of different kinds of living-learning communities at other institutions

Campus	Undergraduate Students	Different kinds of living-learning communities	Academic programming included or not	Faculty Director included or not	Affiliated Faculty included or not	Academic Advising in Hall	Extra fee for the program
University of South Carolina USC	26700	21 total communities of three kinds: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Faculty-Principal Led ▪ Associated Community ▪ Linked course community 	Residential curriculum, some academics woven in. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Faculty-Led – students take some common courses. Associated focus on area of study or student interest so sharing of interests ▪ Linked course community – students take major courses together. 	6 faculty-led communities. Faculty have dual appointment (typically 3-year term) with home academic department and Provost’s Office. In 5, faculty have office space but do not live onsite. All offer students the opportunity to co-enroll in 2-3 core courses.	Faculty-led - faculty connected to the community. Relationship varies across campus; some faculty are resources within the academic department and provide support from afar and faculty in other communities are actively involved in programming.	No	Students in faculty led communities pay ~\$200/student
University of Washington UWA	32,000 7790 first-years	1300 students in 6 LLCs that occupy particular floors of res halls; 3 linked to academic programs and 3 are communities with like interests to foster study groups FIGS – same 20 to 25 students take courses together for 1 st quarter; one course is their 101 course; ~ 50% of first-year students in FIGs	Three LLCs with academic programs require students to apply and be admitted and preference given to students in those majors	No indication for LLCs FIGs have a faculty who offers the FIG and teaches a course; students do not necessarily live together	LLCs include activities with faculty and advisors	In the 6 LLCs Not in FIGs	No indication of extra fee for either model
Texas A&M University TAMU	54,000 with 10,000 first-years	4 kinds: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 2 Academic Residential Experience Districts (Engineering and Honors) ▪ 7 Academic LLCs ▪ 2 Enhanced LLCs ▪ Themed or interest 	All have required class except themed or interest programs; required course may be a “101” course Many have participation requirement like a major	No indication	Collaborating faculty for academic residential districts (engineering, honors) and for Academic LLCs; Enhanced LLCs may or may not have faculty and themed or interest do no	Yes in 2 Districts No indication present in other models	No extra fee for programs

Campus	Undergraduate Students	Different kinds of living-learning communities	Academic programming included or not	Faculty Director included or not	Affiliated Faculty included or not	Academic Advising in Hall	Extra fee for the program
U Wisconsin-Madison UWM	30,000 with ~6610 first-years	20% of students in 11 Residential Learning Communities; size from 30 to 700+ students so some occupy entire res hall and others occupy just floors FIGs - clusters of usually 3 courses linked to explore a theme; 20% of students in FIGs	Every learning community offers a seminar related to the topic of learning community that only residents in community take; Some additional academic courses for each residence hall including learning communities	Faculty director FIGs have an instructor at center who teaches main FIG course and who chooses the two linked courses; 60 FIGs in Fall 2018	Some have affiliated faculty	Not in Res Learning Communities Not in FIGs	Additional fee of \$200-300 for residential learning communities No extra cost for FIGs
Michigan State University MSU	39,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 5 neighborhoods with residence halls and 3 types of community: ▪ 3 Degree-granting residential colleges ▪ 5 Residential Communities ▪ 3 special interest communities (including ROTC and Music) 	Academic programming in Residential colleges 3 of the residential communities	No mention of faculty directors but are faculty affiliated with some	Faculty in residential colleges and Honors (which is a residential community) Faculty with all 5 residential communities but largely to provide academic support No indication with special interest communities	Yes in some models	No charges indicated
Elon University	6200	23 different LLCs of 4 kinds: faculty led, thematic, staff directed, student directed. Have variety of themes (service learning, honors, creative arts, fine arts) Learning communities: A 101 course linked with a core curriculum course	All LLCs follow a curriculum designed by the LLC Advisor. Each community has a faculty advisor. All curricula include faculty driven components in addition to experiential learning opportunities	Layers to the programmatic opportunities and each includes faculty oversight. A faculty oversees each LLC, are multiple FIRs, and Faculty Directors who oversee neighborhoods. Each neighborhood also has a theme and a full curriculum in addition to the LLC curriculum	All LLCs have faculty partners, even those that are staff led. Only some have courses attached to the community. A separate curriculum per community based around the theme. LLCs are driven by the residential experience as opposed to many LLCs that are driven by the classroom component	101 course instructor in hall is academic advisor as well	Budget of \$11000 for all LLCs and money (usually \$10000) per neighborhood. Faculty directors not paid but get course release

Appendix 3 - Staffing for Residential Neighborhoods

Overall Staffing Structure

- Buildings broken down by area into three distinct residential neighborhoods. Themes will be developed at the neighborhood and building level.
- Faculty Neighborhood Directors: (3) Central, Kittredge, Williams Village. These faculty will live in.
- Faculty Program Directors: Loosely (1) in each residence hall, 500 to 1 ratio, total 18
- Program Coordinators: Loosely (1) in each residence hall with a few combined communities based on building size, 500 to 1 ratio, total 12.

Per Neighborhood

Central: 1 Faculty Neighborhood Director (live in, Baker Hall), 8 Faculty Program Directors, 8 Program Coordinators

- Due to the size of the buildings and distinct building history and themes, we have not doubled up communities.
 - Willard
 - Hallett
 - Quad
 - Farrand
 - Libby
 - Cheyenne Arapaho
 - Baker
 - Sewell

Kittredge: 1 Faculty Neighborhood Director (live in, multiple apartments to choose from), 3 Faculty Program Directors, 2 Program Coordinators.

- These buildings have been matched to work in tandem due to size and to match residence hall staffing structure
- There is opportunity for more Faculty Directors to live in within Kittredge due to increased apartments.
 - Andrews and Kittredge Central
 - Arnett and Smith
 - Kittredge West and Buckingham

Williams Village: 1 Faculty Neighborhood Director (live in, Williams Village North), 4 Faculty Program Directors, 2 Program Coordinators

- Due to the structure and size of the buildings, some buildings have been placed together.
 - Williams Village East
 - Williams Village North
 - Stearns Towers
 - Darley

Staffing Total:

3 Faculty Neighborhood Directors

15 Faculty Program Directors

12 Program Coordinators

Roles and Titles

Director of Integrative Learning in Residential Communities

The Director of Integrative Learning in Residential Communities is a staff member in Student Affairs who provides partnership to Faculty Neighborhood Directors, Faculty Program Directors, Program Coordinators and key residence life staff, in order to facilitate neighborhood and building integration of academic life with campus life. This position will help coordinate the integration of faculty within the residential experience, high-impact learning practices in neighborhood, building and tradition development, the creation and coordination of the CU 101 course, as well as lead assessment efforts of the program as a whole.

Faculty Neighborhood Director

The Neighborhood Director is a faculty member who lives within each of the first year neighborhoods and assists with the leadership and academic integration of the residence hall neighborhood in which they are assigned. The Faculty Neighborhood Director co-chairs the neighborhood association with the Assistant and Associate Directors of Residence Life assigned to their community and directly oversees all Faculty Program Directors for the buildings within their neighborhood. In addition, this position coordinates integration to faculty affiliates and faculty integration across the neighborhood as a whole. These roles work in partnership with the Director of Integrative Learning, Associate Director of Residence Life for Educational Initiatives and fellow Associate and Assistant Directors in Residence Life as necessary.

Faculty Program Director

The Faculty Program Director is a faculty member who works within the residence hall building and assists with the leadership and academic integration of the building in which they are assigned. These faculty work to build the academic plan for the residence hall in addition to serving on the Neighborhood Association, and work in partnership with the Hall Directors and Program Coordinator of their buildings, as well as the Assistant Director for Academic Partnerships and Assistant Directors in Residence Life as necessary. This role is led by the Faculty Neighborhood Director for the neighborhood in which they are assigned, and works in close partnership with the Director of Integrative Learning. Note: There is opportunity for some Faculty Program Directors to live in, particularly within Kittredge.

Program Coordinator

Program Coordinators are responsible for the overall day-to-day job operations of a Residence Life building office and coordination of administrative and programmatic responsibilities related to faculty integration and program development within the building and neighborhood in which they are assigned. These staff provide support to the Faculty Neighborhood Director, Faculty Program Director, Hall Director, student staff and building residents, and is often the first contact many students have with their building community.

Appendix 4 – Proposed By-Laws FYAE Governance Committee

This document defines the governance structure and administrative oversight for the First Year Academic Experience (FYAE) at CU Boulder.

Purpose and Rationale

A campus-wide governing structure is necessary to guide the efficient operations of the FYAE Program and to ensure that decisions regarding this student program are aligned with campus mission and resources.

FYAE Governance Committee

Committee Representation

The FYAE Governance Committee consists of voting members representing the following stakeholders and offices on campus, with each position or office having the ability to name a representative within their area:

- Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs
- Vice Provost of Undergraduate Education
- Associate Deans from A&S, CEAS, CMCI, and Leeds
- Director, Residence Life
- Director, Occupancy Management
- Director, New Student and Family Programs
- Office of the Registrar
- Office of Admissions
- Budget Office
- Advancement, *ex officio*

The committee is co-chaired by the Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and Vice Provost of Undergraduate Education.

Roles and Scope

1. Review proposals by schools and colleges for new FYAE programs
2. Conduct reviews of current FYAE programs over a 4 year period to identify program strengths and weaknesses and provide constructive options for program development.
3. Review and approve new summer bridge programs to ensure that their programs and events complement, but do not duplicate, activities that are conducted during Fall Welcome or that will be part of the FYAE programs
4. Oversee scheduling of FYAE courses in classrooms across all residence halls, and ensure effective utilization of classroom space in the residence halls.
5. Oversee assessment plan for the FYAE program.
6. Manage contracts for faculty-in-residence (FIR) – see documenting outlining roles & responsibilities for FIR

7. The Governance Committee does not have authority over:
 - a. Residence hall facilities
 - b. Housing assignments
 - c. Hall directors and affiliated staff
 - d. The academic program within the FYAEs

Meetings

1. Committee members are expected to attend all meetings. If the regular member is not available, that member may designate a replacement for the meeting.
2. A quorum will be present if at least half of the committee members are in attendance. Decisions taken at meetings where fewer than seven members are present will be binding only when a simple majority of the full committee has approved such a decision, to be determined by polling those not present at the meeting at which such decision was made.
3. In consultation with the chair, voting and decisions may be done through email without a regular in-person meeting.
4. Meetings will be scheduled on a regular basis during the academic year, at the convenience of the Committee members.

Sub-Committees

1. Sub-committees may be appointed as needed by the co-chairs and may include individuals not on the Governance Committee
2. Sub-committees shall have a limited life, the term to be defined by the co-chairs.
3. Sub-committees shall make recommendations to the Governance Committee. The Committee shall take action as it deems fit on such recommendations.
4. The one exception may be a Grievance sub-committee established as a standing committee. That group should develop and oversee a Grievance Policy.