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# Faculty fellows: Academic initiatives within the residential learning communities at Eastern Illinois University

Denika L. Wilson

*Eastern Illinois University*

This research is a product of the graduate program in [Counseling and Student Development](#) at Eastern Illinois University. [Find out more](#) about the program.

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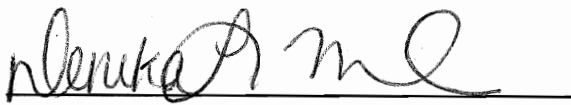
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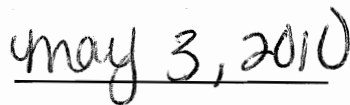
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Faculty Fellows: Academic Initiatives within the Residential

Learning Communities at Eastern Illinois University

(TITLE)

BY

Denika L. Wilson

**THESIS**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF

Master's of Science College Student Affairs

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

May 2010

YEAR

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### **Abstract**

The present study is a qualitative assessment of the current Faculty Fellows program at Eastern Illinois University. The Faculty Fellows program was created to promote academic excellence and individualized attention to foster student retention both in the residence halls and at the University. Since the implementation of the Faculty Fellows program in 2004, there has been no formal evaluation of the current program. The present research will help fill this gap in knowledge about faculty-student interaction. A qualitative study was conducted using two focus groups and two groups of individual interviews following a semi-structured protocol. The focus groups and two groups of individual interviews were electronically recorded, transcribed, and comparative analyzed by the researcher for emerging themes within groups first (Faculty Fellows, RAs, Professional Staff, Residence hall students) and then across groups to check for triangulation of themes. Seven themes emerged from this qualitative assessment of the Faculty Fellows program, including (1) a lack of understanding and purpose of the program, (2) respondent perceptions and attitudes toward the program, (3) a lack of commitment to the program from all stakeholder groups interviewed, (4) miscommunication about program objectives and processes, (5) accountability issues, (6) barriers preventing program implementation, and (7) lack of perceived benefits.

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### **Dedication**

This study is dedicated to my grandparents: Mrs. Legirtha A. Burton and Mr. and Mrs. Robert L. Wilson Sr.. Thank you so much for providing a foundation for our family and continuing to show me that I can do ALL things through Christ that strengthens me.

With all my love...

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **Introduction**

Many institutions of higher education have developed some form of living and learning communities (LLC) to facilitate students' holistic learning inside and outside the classroom (Gahagan, 2004). As current administrators and faculty might say, the ultimate objective of living and learning communities is to promote an integrated learning experience. Integrated learning is a hot topic within Student Affairs and Higher Education, and many administrators are working diligently to get students to engage with faculty outside of the classroom (Whitt, 2006). What this integrative learning initiative represents for co-curricular departments (student personnel services agencies) is that the professionals who work in them need to respond as educators to holistically educate students. "The full maturing of each student cannot be attained without interest in and integrated efforts toward the development of each and every facet of his [sic] personality and potentialities" (American Council on Education, 1949, p. 122).

Student Affairs educators work to constantly update themselves in student development theory and accurate practices for student life; collaborating as an academic team to effect change helps not only faculty members around out-of-class communication hurdles but also helps increase communication opportunities among student personnel professionals as well. According to Titus (as cited in McCusky and Dunkel, 2006, p. 7), "collaboration is critical and change is constant and expected; using leadership roles require organizations to develop new ways of communicating, to share resources, to manage and embrace changes, and emphasize learning".

Transitioning student personnel leaders into roles as educators has been an ongoing conflict between college faculty members and student personnel agencies due to the different approaches the two divisions take when trying to reach students. Trueblood (as cited in Saddlemire and Rentz, 1986, p. 227) stated Student Affairs professionals reach students through a holistic approach while faculty members are using the scholarly student approach when educating students. Due to increasing pressures added to faculty members' lives [research, larger classes and publishing for tenure], the role expectations for student affairs personnel have also multiplied and include "reinforcing classroom activity, programming for other learning needs of the whole student while having the primary attitude and role of an educator-teacher" (Trueblood, as cited in Saddlemire and Rentz, 1986, p. 227). While practicing integrative learning may seem strenuous to some faculty members since it requires connection with students beyond the individual course taught, it is a necessary foundation for continuous growth for the university and its students (Hutchings, 2006).

#### *Purpose of the Study*

Eastern Illinois University (EIU) has done an intense amount of work over the past several years in working to improve collaboration between academic and student affairs. The Office of Housing and Dining Services team has created a Faculty Fellows program with the vision of engaging students with faculty members outside of the classroom. Even with a supportive body of research evidence, many institutions including EIU continue to struggle with either gaining the participation or interest from faculty members or staff to engage in co-curricular activities that support learning communities facilitating integrative learning.



While student satisfaction surveys have evaluated residence hall life in the past, qualitative data on academic support initiatives implemented by Housing and Dining Services staff members can provide more detailed feedback to assess faculty engagement outside of the classroom as well as Faculty Fellow program effectiveness. The purpose of the present study was to create a formative evaluation of the current Faculty Fellows program at EIU.

### *Research Questions*

Three questions were created for the present study. First, what are the perceived roles of the Faculty Fellow? Secondly, what is the overall effectiveness of the current Faculty Fellows program? Thirdly, how can this program be improved in future semesters?

### *Significance of the Study*

Living learning programs implemented specifically at EIU include the Faculty Fellows Program coordinated by the Housing and Dining Service Department's Academic Initiative and Retention Committee. The mission of the Academic Initiative and Retention Committee is to promote lifelong learning by providing the resources necessary for continued academic excellence. The Faculty Fellows program, a fairly new initiative established in 2004 from the Residence Life Department, is dedicated to fostering the ultimate relationship between EIU's faculty members and students living within thirteen residence halls on campus.

The Faculty Fellows program was created to promote academic excellence and individualized attention to foster student retention both in the residence halls and at the University. Participating faculty members are able to gain an awareness of student

perspectives and how campus life really is experienced by EIU students. Faculty fellows and students interact at least four times a year within the residential setting. During these quarterly visits, faculty members are encouraged to participate in programs within the building including House Calls on residential living floors, a Charleston Chew dinner with an individual student, and a group lunch with students. President William L. Perry (2008) assessed the campus culture and concluded four themes that would be important for EIU's advancement: values, potential, priority, and resources that would promote lifelong learning and help make the institution the best in the nation in the integrated academic and personal development of students. President Perry proclaimed "I am encouraging interdivision discussions for projects or actions that will involve or be supported by individuals in more than one vice presidential division area" (Perry, 2008).

Interactions between students and faculty outside the classroom have a significant impact on students. Having the ability to connect and contribute to the college experience of their students as a faculty member should not end when class is dismissed (Cotten & Wilson, 2006). Although much research has been provided to show that these outside experiences have a positive impact on the lives of students, researchers find that there are still gaps in knowledge about student -faculty interactions. Thompson (as cited in Cotten & Wilson, 2006) found in his study of community college students that as the level of interaction increased between faculty and students, students placed more value on academic efforts. Since the implementation of the Faculty Fellows program in 2004, there has been no formal comprehensive evaluation of the current program. The present research will help fill this gap in knowledge about faculty-student interaction. The outcome of this research may help faculty educators and student affairs educators at EIU

to form a clearer common vision as they work towards accomplishing the university's goal of being the best in the nation at integrated learning.

Scholars have examined student-faculty interactions and concluded that students often did not take full advantage of faculty as resources (Cotten & Wilson, 2006).

"During my school days very few, if any, instructors acted as if they truly cared for the success of the students nor did they take time to assist. I hope I never stop thinking about the students' concerns and success as my number one obligation" (Horn, 1998, p. 45).

The interactive residential environment also supports the University's goal of increasing the knowledge of student to faculty and faculty to student living experiences, while encouraging students' use of faculty as resources and for information, referral, and mentoring (Perry, 2008). While research has provided much about the impact of faculty-student interactions, Kuh & Hu (as cited in Cotten & Wilson, 2006, p. 490) noted that "we know little about the dynamic processes that underpin the associations that exist between student-faculty interactions and student outcomes".

Experiences outside the classroom are not only memorable for students and faculty alike, but they often times create a new sense of understanding and of teamwork between both parties. "It was the informal contact with faculty members that I remember best; it was not uncommon for instructors to open up their homes and engaging in other relationship building activities" (Horn, 1998, p. 45). Once this understanding is created, the bond between the students and selected faculty members are made stronger with every interaction. This voluntary interaction is often facilitated through educational programs such as Faculty Fellows on several campuses across the nation. Whitt (2006) conducted a study based on the twenty Project Documenting Effective Educational

Practice (DEEP) campuses and presented “ten lessons highlighting how educators and student affairs educators in particular can shape environments that enhance student learning” (p. 1).

### *Limitations of Study*

This researcher recognizes her internal biases when researching and presenting the information found throughout this project (Schein, 1999). It is also acknowledged that it may be perceived by some that a conflict of interest exists because the researcher is employed by the Department of Housing and Dining.

### *Definitions of Terms*

ResLife - better known as Residential Life, which focuses on the student development piece with students living on campus.

Pro-Staff – better known as Professional Staff members, are considered graduate student (Associate Resident Director) or full time (Resident or Complex Director) staff members within Housing who directly supervise Resident Assistants.

RAs – better known as Resident Assistants, are selected undergraduate students assigned to work with specific learning communities to provide safety and security, programming, and academic encouragement.

Integrated Learning (according to EIU) – Integrated learning entails providing students with coherent academic curricula enhanced with significant learning and life experiences outside of the traditional classroom context.

House Calls – House calls is a program or opportunity for faculty members and Student Affairs professionals to interact with students on the students’ floor living environment once per semester.

Charleston Chews – Charleston Chews is an initiative provided by the EIU Housing Department

to encourage faculty / student interaction over a meal in the university dining halls.

Faculty Fellows – Faculty Fellows is a program dedicated to providing a bridge between the formal classroom academic program and the out-of-classroom learning and developmental activities of residents within university residence halls.

Academic Initiative and Retention Committee (AIR) – The mission of the Academic Initiative and Retention Committee within the Office of Housing and Dining Services is to promote lifelong learning by providing the resources necessary for continued academic excellence within the university residential living environment.

### **Summary**

This chapter introduced the concept of integrated learning and the current EIU Faculty Fellows program. This chapter also provided an overview of the purpose of the study, the research question, the significance of the study, the limitations of the study, and the definitions. The next chapter will present a literature review on research in the area of integrated learning with a focus on living-learning communities.

## CHAPTER II

### Literature Review

Learning Communities have a long history within higher education dating to 1264 when the Bishop of Rochester founded Merton College in Oxford, England. According to Ryan (as cited in Klein, 2000), Merton College, which was built around a chapel was more “interested in promoting character development and moral behavior among students than in their vocational and professional development” (p. 14). From there, many initiatives focused on benefiting the church and this process of a learning community later became a method for improving the quality of the undergraduate experience, including New Oxford in 1379 (Klein, 2000). Despite the benefits associated with this residential concept, this idea decreased in the thirteenth century and nonresidential colleges became the model for study, which included new subjects, electives, and more importantly the elimination of residences as sites of learning until the nineteenth century (Klein, 2000).

Meiklejohn introduced the “Experimental College” (Stassen, 2003) at the University of Wisconsin in the 1920s and was the first person to introduce learning communities (LC) within American higher education. The Experimental College had an “integrated curriculum intentionally designed to facilitate faculty-student engagement” (Stassen, 2003, p. 581). With this transition came other movements in the 1920s for American higher education which included educating the whole student. In the 1930s, Harvard’s President Eliot called for growing numbers of students from a variety of geographies and social science classes to help bridge the gap between religions and get students communicating with each other in a more structured environment in order to

allow students to learn from one another. Due to the growth of interaction and requests for specialization, Harvard and other institutions in the Ivy League put residential colleges in their universities, working to protect the idea of collaboration between religion and coursework (Klein, 2000).

During this movement within American higher education, there was another inspired concept created around educating the whole student, starting with Woodrow Wilson, President of Princeton, urging the academic community to “awaken the whole man by joining the intellectual and spiritual life”(Klein, 2000, p. 15). The Student Personnel Point of View of 1949 supported educating the whole student, and stated that “the concept of education is broadened to include attention to the student’s well-rounded development- physically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually- as well as intellectually and should encompass the student as a whole” (American Council on Education, 1949, p. 76). This concept alone transpired into a period in which students and faculty members would later live and learn together.

Learning communities have been a part of American higher education since the 1920s and have now taken on a variety of names hoping to define the opportunity of allowing students to engage with faculty outside of the academic setting. Integrative Learning and / or Learning Communities are not concepts with which many readers are likely to be familiar. The conversations on integrative learning probably will be most productive if those participating were informed about some of the literature on the topic. First year experiences, Focused Interest Groups or Learning Communities are all based on a substantial body of research that identifies the factors contributing to student learning and academic success (Jafee, Carle, Phillips, & Paltoo, 2008).

Levine and Shapiro (2000) stated that Learning Communities represent an intentional restructure of students' time, credit, and learning experiences in ways that promote more intentional connections among students and their teachers, and among disciplines (p. 20). By design, learning communities promote greater student involvement with each other, in what they are learning, and with the college community. Classroom-based learning communities improve student retention and achievement, enhance intellectual development, and increase overall satisfaction with the college experience (Mac-Gregor, 1987; Tinto, Love, & Russo, 1993). Learning communities are linked to many positive outcomes for students, faculty, staff and the institution itself, including increased faculty-student and student-student interactions, increased student involvement and deepened learning (Gahagan, 2004). Overall, successful learning communities promote excellence in learning, encourage strong faculty-student engagement and help establish a stronger institutional community.

Students' social networks are often supported and reinforced by learning communities. Students that live and learn together gain more of a support system, not only with their peers but with faculty involved in that process. A professor reflected on the changes made when deciding to enter the world of learning communities within the residential community.

I used to plead with my students to stop by for a conference  
or a chat; now I can't get them out of my office without  
polite subterfuge. I had found a tight knit community of like-  
minded faculty, staff, and students bent on discovering



and embracing the ethos of the learning community (Klein, 2000 p. 12-13).

Learning communities are often used as the model for service learning or strategies for teaching cultural competency. Many reviewers, including Hess, Lanig, & Vaughan (2007) believed that implementing a learning community in an institution could also help those involved to reach a level of cultural effectiveness, which would include the faculty members, community, and students. At Rollins College, the first year program known as the Rollins College Conference (RCC), fosters students' transition to college and has helped to retain students who would typically leave college before their second year (Eck, Edge, & Stephenson, 2007, p. 6).

During the seminar course provided at Rollins College, students meet with a faculty member to explore a topic within that member's area of expertise. The course meets four times per week and on Friday (the Fourth Hour), students are provided time to build continual relationships; attend campus wide events and community engagement projects with their faculty member. The Fourth Hour serves as an opportunity to show students how important they are to the faculty members. That hour "generates feelings of loyalty and specialness about becoming involved global citizens and responsible leaders" to the students involved (Eck, Edge, & Stephenson, 2007, p. 6). Assessment has shown that this program has improved connections with peers, knowledge of academic services, critical thinking, academic and cognitive skills, and connections with faculty (Eck, Edge, & Stephenson, 2007). Providing opportunities for students to interact with faculty members improve connections, and assessing these opportunities is imperative for continued growth within an organization similar to the Faculty Fellows initiative at EIU.

Many residence life programs are focused on the integrated learning concept, but most institutions developing such programs struggle with finding adequate support needed from faculty members in order for faculty student interactions to flourish. Residential learning communities at Syracuse University create an academically supportive environment for students in the residence halls. Syracuse University has developed several academic and interest specific learning communities, including the Education Living Learning Community, the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender & Allies (LGBTA) Studies Learning Community, and the Sustainability Learning Community, where students live together and take one or more courses together (<http://lc.syr.edu/content/which.aspx>).

There have been several attempts made within the traditional residence hall structure to involve faculty members within the setting. Changes in the physical structure at some institutions were also created to accommodate faculty members in order to be in closer proximity to undergraduate students. Similar to Northwestern University, faculty members involved participate in informal academic advising to students that are studying within their field/discipline. A senior faculty member (college master) guides the programmatic life of the residential colleges on campus as well. Michigan State University's living and learning residential program allows students with similar academic or multicultural living experiences the opportunity to live together on a particular residence hall floor or designated building. Many of the residential programs permit students to take courses together and some have faculty and academic advisors' offices within the residence hall. Matthews (1994) stated "There are many variations on the models of learning communities, as there are institutions willing to participate; all,

however, strive to provide an intense and supportive environment for intellectual growth and development” (p. 16).

Implementing living learning communities proves the commitment to further improve student engagement through academic and social integration. A proposal for creating a student learning experience that develops students personally, socially, and professionally was made by Keeling (2004) in *Learning Reconsidered*. The proposal advocated collaboration in all aspects of higher education, including community service, social justice, ethical behavior, cultural awareness, and development of critical thinking beyond classroom learning. This concept of living learning communities was intended to be a campus-wide initiative to promote academic and social excellence through all interactions and activities of the college experience. The learning outcomes of this campus atmosphere and structure could be applied to the initiatives implemented by the Residence Life department, including the Faculty Fellows program, ensuring that opportunities for student involvement support value-based learning in accordance with the *Learning Reconsidered* proposal (Keeling, 2004).

In focusing on student learning outcomes, Keeling (2004) concluded there was a meaningful goal behind the proposal. Working across two proposals, *Learning Reconsidered (LR)* and *Learning Reconsidered 2(LR2)*, Keeling identified benefits that were not only specific to student affairs practitioners, but also to faculty members asked to work in a complex environment (Fried, 2007). “Higher education typically operates out of playbooks that separate learning from living” and Fried (2007) determined that collaborators must not only share the same playbook and learning outcomes, but they

must realize as educators that they are learning new processes and languages about one another as well (Fried, 2007, p. 4).

Besides allowing educators the opportunity to share in the new learning process explained by Fried, researchers found that Student Affairs practitioners, particularly residence life professionals, needed to let go of the trend of learning being confined to the academic side and to become more accountable for their students' learning experiences while attending the university (Harper and Antonio, 2008). Harper & Antonio (2008) posed the question of student affairs professionals being valuable contributors to learning versus being seen as the human knot professionals. As Hartley found in a study of living learning implementation, "institutions embraced the concept of student learning, but their approaches and programming offered were the same as before" (in Harper & Antonio, 2008, p. 5).

Faculty and students are the "heart and soul" of every learning community implemented. Although faculty members are the first to initiate change in his/her institution of higher education, they are "frequently slow to accept changes that appear to alter traditional relationships between faculty and administration, faculty and students, faculty in their own departments, other departments, and the university community at large" (Levine & Shapiro, 1999, p. 91). With that in mind, learning communities can serve as an introduction to something new, a partnership with student affairs and relationships that were unexpected within the undergraduate outcome. Having to adapt to this environmental change within the institution also provides competition and collaboration between other departments that would include Residence Life, in their

efforts to create an environment where faculty to student engagement is a positive implementation.

Due to faculty members being highly involved in teaching, assessing the impact that faculty behaviors and interactions with students in the classroom have on undergraduate classroom experiences was key for Umbach & Wawrzynski (2005). Little knowledge was known about the subject of educational practices that predict student engagement or approaches that faculty take to maintain an effective educational practice. The authors focused on the quality of undergraduate teaching, interactions with faculty and peers, and involvement in coursework that added value to student learning. Banta & Kuh (1998) discovered that faculty members do not know enough about the current generation of students nor can faculty accomplish the college's objectives for students' intellectual and personal development by themselves; cooperation and collaboration among others who work with students is needed (p. 40).

Collaboration within an institution means first being able to find common ground between the cooperating groups and ensuring that both feel equal, while bringing expertise to the table. Banta & Kuh (1998) discovered that "the most promising but underused opportunity for collaboration between academic and student affairs professionals comes in the form of outcome assessment" (p. 40). Although academic and student affairs professionals promote student success in two different aspects, assessment provides the opportunity for both to sit at the same table and share their expertise. Dungy reported that

Academic affairs, through *Greater Expectations* (AAC&U, 2002) and student affairs in *Learning Reconsidered* (ACPA & NASPA, 2004) agreed that the first

steps in achieving quality in universities are to agree on learning outcomes; to determine what role all sectors of the academy have in contributing to the successful achievement of these outcomes; and to assess the degree to which students successfully achieve the learning outcomes as a result of their relationships with colleges or universities (p. 10).

When faculty members along with Residence Life professionals [as in working with the faculty fellows program] have the opportunity to help establish the learning outcomes of the program or ask the question “What do we expect the student to know or to do as a result of our program”, the success rate would be greater (Bresciani, 2003, p. 16). Assessing the program as well as the work collaborated with faculty members not only provides results for accountability, but also helps determine the degree to which student affairs professionals’ efforts are working and whether desired goals are being accomplished.

Stimpson (1994) argued that campus colleagues would be more willing to support the efforts of promoting educational experiences within the living environment if the residence hall staff established a reputation for effectively carrying out their basic responsibilities as educators. Actively examining current Student Affairs departments on campus, there is reasoning to believe that Stimpson’s reservation is somewhat true. On the other hand, although some may argue that residence hall staff members are not carrying out their responsibilities, it could very well be acknowledged that classroom academicians are also in the same situation.

Whitt (2006) examined twenty Project Documenting Effective Educational Practice (DEEP) campuses in search for lessons that Student Affairs practitioners should

know in order to build a more collaborative and integrated institution across campus. The most important item on the list was a partnership for learning. After examining the campuses, Whitt established that the most effective partnerships are those that involve mutual respect and share an affinity for their school's mission and culture. These institutions understand that each is there to foster and not compete with or undercut students' academic achievement. Most importantly, these institutions "know and behave as though educating students is everyone's business and all must work together" (Whitt, 2006, p. 5). Supporting this statement, Stimpson (1994) suggested that residence hall staff should take advantage of opportunities to work with academic personnel in order to promote academic achievement within the institution.

Appleton (2008) suggested that student affairs professionals become more intentional with their approach for faculty collaboration. "Faculty should be encouraged by their deans and administrators to participate in this collaboration, and tenure reward structures should take these efforts into account through teaching, research, or service credit" (Appleton, 2008, p. 10). On the other hand, student affairs practitioners must show themselves as professional educators that have earned their right to be called an expert in educating students outside of the classroom. Professionals that are serious and intentional about learning have written plans that guide their educational efforts. Simply housing 1,500 students into a residence hall and concluding they will magically learn from each others' differences represents both naïveté and educational negligence in student affairs practice (Harper & Antonio, 2008).

Student Affairs practitioners are always on the forefront for producing retention and integrated learning experiences and/or programs for their institutions. While research

supports the argument of student affairs practitioners being at the forefront and progressing towards improving the integrated experiences, student affairs administrators are quite aware of the amount of effort that needs to take place in order for collaboration between academic affairs and student affairs to work successfully. Working in part with collaboration means that both academic and student affairs professionals must be intentional when offering learning experiences outside of the classroom. By being intentional, professionals are not only promoting excellence but “encouraging strong-faculty engagement and a stronger institutional community” (Gahagan, 2004, p. 30). Remembering to be intentional and inclusive when promoting academics within higher education is very important when the desire exists to collaborate to create a successful integrated community.

Research into the topic of learning communities has produced the following suggestions about the benefits of students living on campus. First, students learn best when they are able to make substantive interdisciplinary connections across their courses. Second, learning is enhanced when students are able to interact and engage with their peers about the subject matter in their courses. Third, students learn best when they are actively engaged, versus passively present, in the learning process through hands-on problem solving and application. Fourth, students tend to be more successful when they are able to develop a meaningful academic relationship with faculty (Hernandez, Hogan, Hathaway, & Lovell, 1999). Overall, living within a residential community provides more opportunities to engage with faculty and staff and therefore should be given the support from campus administrators to ensure that residence halls are environments that



foster the sharing of responsibility, and of fostering student development and learning through involvement with other areas of campus.

Understanding the dynamics of a living learning community, associated with Holland's Concept of Congruence, can help staff members work with students who may not fit within the unit (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998). However, Jafee (2007) stated that more harm was produced when faculty members teach and interact with living learning communities because students created a bond and cohesion with their living learning faculty members that later presented an "us-versus-them" orientation in comparison to their interaction with students and faculty in other courses (p. 68).

Residence hall educational initiatives seek to create opportunities for social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1962), a learning theory that advocates framing learning environments conducive to social interaction between students. Students interacting with each other often provide the most powerful and significant educational and developmental experiences as they share learning experiences (Tucker, 2006). The newest model for college and university residence hall life creates a learning community that is structured using "a variety of approaches intended to complement students' college experiences beyond the classroom by providing supportive learning environments, community development programs, educational programs, and opportunities for stronger relationships with faculty and staff" (Porter, 2006, p. 122).

### **Summary**

In this chapter, literature surrounding the topic of integrative learning was explored as it applied to the affects and benefits of collaborating between academic and student affairs, the history of the educational initiatives within the residential community,

the various opportunities provided through integrative learning and the importance of integrative learning. The next chapter introduces the qualitative methodology used to support the formative assessment of the EIU Faculty Fellows program that is the focus of this thesis.

## CHAPTER III

### Methodology

The purpose of the present qualitative study was to create a formative evaluation of the current Faculty Fellows program at Eastern Illinois University. Specifically, what is the depth and breadth of interaction between students and faculty members participating in the Faculty Fellows Program? What is the interaction between student affairs staff members and faculty members participating in the Faculty Fellows Program? What is the interaction of students and student affairs staff members participating in the Faculty Fellows Program? Being able to obtain information from persons holding various roles within the institution and the housing and dining department can impact Faculty Fellow program modifications for improved program delivery, fidelity, and student learning outcomes. Terenzini (1995) indicated that existing quantitative studies show that faculty interaction with students beyond the classroom is very important, however, it is less clear where and under what circumstances the Faculty Fellow role fits within the possible range of out of class faculty/student interactions.

#### *Research Site*

The research site for the current study was Eastern Illinois University. McMillan & Schumacher (2006) stated that, "when selecting a site, it should be located around the people that are involved in the particular event" (p. 319). Eastern is a comprehensive, midsize public institution of 12,000 students located in central Illinois. Eastern Illinois University has a very unique opportunity to promote integrated learning, since the concept has major support from the President of the University. President Perry challenged the University community to increase student to faculty and faculty to student

living/learning experiences, as well as encouraging students' use of faculty as resources and for information, referral, and mentoring (William Perry, personal communication, September 30, 2009). Perry promotes lifelong learning and wants to help make EIU the BEST in the nation in the integrated academic and personal development of students (Blair Lord, personal communication, September 30, 2009).

### *Design of Study*

A qualitative research design was selected because of the importance of getting the whole story of differing faculty and student perceptions about their experiences. Geertz (as cited in Cotten & Wilson, 2006, p. 492) argued that qualitative research is appropriate when the researcher seeks to understand the lived experiences of individuals and groups and their institutional context through the meanings developed. Qualitative research is first concerned with "understanding social phenomena from participants' perspectives and could provide detailed analyses of particular events" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006, p. 318). In focusing on the effectiveness of the current Faculty Fellows program, choosing a qualitative methodology was beneficial to drawing a connection between student affairs and academic affairs while studying the process of student to faculty interaction within the residence life environment. Qualitative methodology allows the researcher to examine the meanings behind human relationships and how they impact interactions within the residential setting. The primary objective of the present study is to fully explore the thoughts and feelings of the individuals involved within this program so that a greater understanding of faculty involvement may be reached.

*Research Question*

The immediate goal of the present study was to understand the experiences of current Faculty Fellow program participants from multiple perspectives. The ultimate goal was to improve future program delivery fidelity to support the EIU President's goal of making the university the best in the country in terms of integrated learning. The research question below is focused on obtaining a comprehensive understanding of the processes by which the Faculty Fellows program is carried out.

In what way can information about the current experiences of Faculty Fellow program participants be used to improve the fidelity of program delivery in future semesters?

*Research Participants*

Resident Assistants (RA), Residence Life Professional Staff (Pro-Staff), Residence hall students, and faculty members involved in the Faculty Fellows program attending a mid-sized Midwestern four-year public institution were the research participants identified for this study. Participants were solicited via e-mail from residence halls and the Faculty Fellow contact list randomly (Appendix A). RAs and Residence hall students were invited to participate in pre-scheduled focus groups. Pro-Staff members and current Faculty Fellows members were invited to participate in an individual interview with the researcher to keep confidentiality and anonymity among and between professional participants. Participants also completed an informed consent form prior to participation in the proposed research and brought the document with them to their focus group (Appendix B). Copies of the informed consent form were also available for signing prior to the focus groups and individual interviews.

Resident Assistants (RAs) provide the core elements of the Faculty Fellows program, since they tend to interact with a large number of students and often have a good sense of the issues on the minds of residents. The RAs also are considered the first line of the department and most programs implemented through the Faculty Fellows program are created under their leadership.

EIU faculty members are one of the key components within the Faculty Fellows program. According to President Perry and Provost Lord (personal communications, September 30, 2009), the EIU faculty members serving as Faculty Fellows are here to bridge the gap between students and faculty members, "They are here because they want to be here and help students". Faculty members participating in the Faculty Fellows program have the ability to assess the effectiveness of the program from another perspective. It becomes important to collaborate with faculty members when trying to enhance the current program. Additionally, the Integrative Learning Project suggests that integration is also a matter of culture and values, and both students and faculty are more likely to embrace the integrative learning pattern if it includes topics that call on all to contribute different perspectives and expertise (Hutchings, 2006). Some faculty members and administrators place emphasis on deep learning and being able to connect with each student. Examining learning communities could impact the goal of deep learning in a more profound meaning for the campus culture if integrative learning is used as an enhancement to the entire undergraduate experience.

The Professional Staff team, consisting of Associate Resident Directors (ARD), Resident Directors (RD), Complex Directors (CD) and Area Director (AD) all serve as the principle gatekeepers to bridging the gap between faculty and students within

residence life. Through the Professional Staff team the connections are formed between student staff and faculty members. During meetings, Professional Staff members are engaging faculty in their communities by effectively communicating with their staff members about academic concerns around their communities. This team also has an expectation that requires each Resident Assistant to complete two Charleston Chews, lunch with a faculty member and residents, per semester. Furthermore, the Professional staff meets with their faculty member once per month and provides funds for additional programming implemented throughout the residential community. By supporting an initiative like the Faculty Fellows program, Residence Life staff members are collaboratively working to share the responsibility of learning and personal development with faculty and administrators.

Residence hall students are the individuals who benefit from the Faculty Fellows program the most. Through the various social interactions with faculty members outside of the classroom, students are able to become more comfortable when needed to communicate with faculty and more engaged as citizens of the community. Research has stated that by engaging in programs such as Faculty Fellows, students are able to make substantive interdisciplinary connections across their courses. Students will be able to interact and engage with their peers about the subject matter in their courses and tend to be more successful when they are able to develop a meaningful academic relationship with faculty (Hernandez, Hogan, Hathaway, & Lovell, 1999).

### *Instrument*

The focus group protocol (Appendix C-F) consisted of open ended questions relating back to the research questions for this study that encouraged participants to

provide detailed descriptions of their experiences with the current Faculty Fellows program. Keeling's (2004) *Learning Reconsidered* advised a focus on student learning outcomes in the makeup of the focus group questions. The interview questions were designed to explore participants [students, RAs, faculty, and professional staff] overall perceptions of the Faculty Fellows program and suggestions for updating the structure to better meet member needs. Appendix C, the focus group protocol for the Resident Assistants, focused on what Housing implements or provides for the Faculty Fellows program. The researchers' intentions when speaking with RAs were to gain their perception and feelings towards the program. Since RAs are considered the front line for the Housing and Dining Department, it was essential that the researcher gain insight on what the Faculty Fellows program meant to these individuals. Because RAs have to communicate with the faculty fellows, it was important to hear the preconceived notions or struggles that these individuals might have while working with the Faculty Fellows program.

Appendix D, the faculty protocol, focused on the preconceived notions of students interacting outside of the classroom. It was important for the researcher to probe questions about the department and what the different titles meant within the Housing Department (RA, ARD, RD, and Faculty Fellow). Because faculty members are the key elements to this program, it was beneficial to provide an opportunity for feedback as to how the program can become better. Open-ended questions were probed to seek the level of comfort when entering residence halls to interact with students in his/her realm versus the classroom setting. With the undergraduate students, the researcher wanted to hear the voice of the students since they are the reason why this program exists. It was important



to find out if students benefited from the program, understood what the program consisted of, the preconceived notions of faculty members as well as undergraduates and where the level of comfort was with faculty members entering their on-campus homes (Appendix E).

When speaking with Professional Staff members, the researcher wanted to focus on the attitudes and perceptions of the program. Also, the researcher provided an opportunity for many to provide feedback on how to make the program better, if it was worth keeping, preconceived notions of faculty and students as well as finding out where their comfort level lied when trying to collaboratively work with faculty members (Appendix F).

#### *Data Collection*

Data were collected through focus groups which facilitated in depth interaction between participants. Two focus groups with up to twelve participants in each group were conducted for the purposes of the study. According to Hess (as cited in Pickering & Calliotte, 1993) focus groups tend to afford for more flexibility than individual interviews with regard to the topic covered. By using focus groups, the researcher realizes that a group interview would often end with the snowballing effect which will be effective when collecting data and analysis. Focus groups lasted approximately 1 hour, depending on the number of participants in each group. The researcher stressed that each individual contribution was important and that everyone had an equal voice in the conversation. All focus group discussions took place in a small study room within the residence halls, where most of the participants lived.

Individual interviews were held with Pro-staff and faculty members to keep these participants as confidential and anonymity as possible. It was important for the researcher to understand the pressure placed on these participants as employees of the institution when speaking to them about a particular program at the university. The researcher chose to interview these members individually due to many faculty members either working towards tenure or having to submit for other incentives that come with serving as a staff member. The researcher wanted to provide a setting for both parties where they would be comfortable sharing their thoughts and stories around the Faculty Fellows program.

Finally, as an active member of the Housing and Dining Services residence life staff, the PI had an overlapping role as a participant-observer during the research process. As a participant-observer, the researcher “adopts a role within the activity in which his/her activities are carried out at the same level as others involved” (Friedrichs & Ludtke, 1975, p. 5). These observations will be used to examine the personal interactions with students and faculty at various programs. Here, the researcher will find out what usually happens in a group setting versus simply what is taking place because he/she is present (Friedrichs & Ludtke, 1975, p. 29).

### *Data Analysis*

The focus group and individual interview discussions were electronically recorded, transcribed and member checked with focus group members for accuracy. Members were encouraged to add additional comments to their focus group statements when they member checked their focus group transcripts. The data was comparative analyzed by the researcher for emerging themes within groups first (Faculty Fellows,

RAs, Professional Staff, Residence hall students) and then across groups to check for triangulation of themes (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006).

### **Summary**

In this chapter, the methodology, including the purpose of the study, qualitative design, participants, location, and procedures for the present study was presented. Four focus groups were completed utilizing a semi-structured protocol. The next chapter will discuss the findings.

## CHAPTER IV

### Results

The present formative assessment of the Faculty Fellows program took place at Eastern Illinois University. Participants were more than willing to candidly discuss the potential of the current program with the PI. The researcher developed protocol (Appendix C-F) to help participants discuss their experiences through their lens as participants within the Faculty Fellows program. In order to gain a thick description of events and perceptions, the PI reinforced the importance of confidentiality within the Consent Form (Appendix A) before having all members affirm their willingness to participate by signing the form. Participants were given the opportunity to answer the research protocol questions presented as candidly and thoroughly as they wished. Participants were also encouraged to develop and elaborate on their initial comments during focus groups and single interviews. In order to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of participants, and material directly connected to any of the participants has been removed. As a means of maintaining participant anonymity, each participant was assigned a particular number known only by the researcher, and all campus buildings or identifiable landmarks have also been given a different title. When names were provided through conversation, the researcher also replaced actual names with pseudonyms. Interview and focus group data are presented within this chapter in thick description, a method that “presents the data in such detail that readers can see for themselves what is going on” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005 p. 285-286; Merriam, 2005). The voices of representatives from four different groups associated with the Faculty Fellows program (R.A., Pro-Staff, Residence Hall Students Faculty, and Faculty) are presented below.

Verbal data were gathered using focus groups and individual interviews. Focus Groups for both RAs and residence hall students were held in a small well-lit study room in the basement of the residence hall where respondents lived. In the room was one large table with twelve chairs placed around it. Lunch was also provided to focus group participants since the meeting time available was during the lunch hour. Individual interviews with Pro-Staff and Faculty Fellows were conducted in their respective offices. All participants read and signed an Informed Consent to participate in the research prior to the beginning of focus groups or individual interviews. Conversations were electronically recorded for later transcription, and all participants gave the PI the opportunity to contact them at a later date if additional information was needed. The recording device was placed in the middle of the table in order to best capture the participants' responses to the research questions. Themes resulting from each of the research questions and appropriate protocol items are described below. Data were analyzed using constant comparative analysis (Schumacher & Macmillan, 2006) first within groups, then across groups to identify emerging themes.

#### *RA GROUP*

Resident Assistants, RAs, are undergraduate student staff members employed by the Housing and Dining department. These individuals live within a learning community with approximately 30 to 60 residents where they enforce policies, plan and implement various programming as well as serving on call once a week for the overall building. There are approximately 86 RAs currently serving in campus residence halls, and twelve were interviewed, representing each residential complex, for the study. The RAs interviewed included six females, six males, and ranged from one to four years'

experience as RAs on EIU's campus. Within the faculty fellows program, RAs served as the communicators to students, staff members, and Faculty Fellows, so they are vital to the success of this program. Faculty Fellow program activities, including House Calls or Charleston Chews, were initially implemented by the RA as a way to increase faculty to student interaction.

Research Question #1 asked: What are the perceived roles of the Faculty Fellow?

Focus group questions related to the first research question were as follows.

1. What is a Faculty Fellow?
2. What is the purpose of the Faculty Fellows program?

To structure the focus group activity, the PI began with asking RA participants to write down the first thing that came to mind when the term, "Faculty Fellows," was mentioned. They were asked to describe the purpose of Faculty Fellows, and rank where they thought the program was on a scale of 1 (being the lowest) to 10 (being the highest).

*What is a Faculty Fellow?*

Participant 6: Um, the first thing I said was interaction between faculty and students, but I agree with what everyone else said so far that it is a good point and have a good goal but we need to think of a different way to go about doing it. Um and then I ranked it a 3.

Participant 4: Um, the first thing that came to my mind is what is that really supposed to be because I don't think we have; I don't think I have a really good understanding of why the teachers aren't coming in and the students aren't really participating. It's like when they come it's just like they just sit around and don't really interact

with the students or the students don't really know why they have to come down  
and talk to the teachers. And I rated it a 3.

*What is the purpose of the Faculty Fellows program?*

Participant 6: Um I've been told that the purpose of [Faculty Fellows] is for professors to see students in their environment and to get a better understanding of that as well as for the students to benefit from seeing the professor outside of their element of teaching in class.

Other focus group participants all nodded in agreement, and the PI asked the group if they were all being told the same thing. Again, all nodded in agreement.

Research Question #2 asked: What is the overall effectiveness of the current Faculty Fellows program?

Focus group questions related to the second research question were as follows.

1. What barriers do you believe exist that prevent students from interacting with faculty within the residence halls?
2. What are your perceptions about the Faculty Fellows program?

*What barriers do you believe exist that prevent students from interacting with faculty within the residence halls?*

Participant 11: Um' it's a major generation gap. They don't quite know how to, um, how to act around us and we don't quite know how to act around them when it's not in the classroom setting. I think that they dread it just as much as we do.

Participant 7: I think that another problem is, um, I think that it's like all of a sudden like they only show up maybe that one House Calls day or faculty whatever we have and then. So not only that but I think that it's not a familiar face to the residents and then all of a sudden you're in a female hall and some old dude is walking the



floor (group laughs) and so you know that right there is awkward and then, oh yeah, he's also a professor. So I mean it starts off like you're just jumping in feet first.

Participant 4: I think it's kind of like a fish out of water on both ends. I mean because in [name of residence hall] we were told to try to make the professors feel comfortable because it's awkward for them because they have never seen a res-hall and never been outside of the classroom with students. For the students they've never had a professor walking around where they live so it's awkward for them to interact with [professors] outside of the classroom as well.

Participant 9: Often times the teachers have nothing in common with the students. I mean most of our fellows are biology or science and you're an English major; that has nothing to do with your major so you're not interested. They [professors] don't have anything in common so it's kind of awkward for a resident to say, "Hey what do you teach?" and for that professor to say, 'Oh I'm a mycology teacher, which is the study of fungus', and they're [students] like 'Oh' and then they [students] are turned off right there (group nods and shakes). So it's like what and how do you get them to start a conversation.

*What are your perceptions about the Faculty Fellows program?*

Participant 1: The first thing that comes to mind, I put is interesting but really the first thing that came to mind was pointless. But I don't think it is pointless, I think it's a good idea to get faculty outside of the classroom and to meet students in their own environment like the Res Hall. So interesting because I can see where there is a point to the program but I just think that it's kind of weird and pointless how

we're doing it. I think it needs to be revamped somehow. Uh, they invite a faculty member to lunch or dinner; that's a great way to start. It's just harder to get the residents to be more interested in that. My ranking was a 3.

Participant 3: Uh, the first thing that came to my mind was teachers and professors. Um, just getting interactions with them is great but the people who go out to the programs tend to like them but its pulling teeth to get them out there to the programs so we need to find out what to do, which is hard and we've been trying to do that for years and I ranked it a 2.

Participant 4: Um, the first thing that came to my mind is what is that really suppose to be because I don't think we have; I don't think I have a really good understanding of why the teachers aren't coming in and the students aren't really participating. It's like when [faculty members] come, they just sit around and don't really interact with the students. The students don't really know why they have to come down and talk to the teachers. And I rated it a 3.

Participant 5: Um I put good in theory, and I rated it a 4.

Participant 7: Um the first thing I thought of was who is my faculty fellow (group laughs). Um, no, I agree with everyone. I feel like the faculty fellows is one of those things that looks great on paper that we've done but then it's one of those things that, um, like everyone said nobody took the time and effort into making it what it potentially could be and for that I gave it a 2.

Participant 8: The first thought for me was a mandatory meeting because, um, its more work on us to not only participate but to try to get residents involved and that itself is a task. And I ranked it a 5 only because our faculty fellows that we have

in the [residence hall] are really nice and when we do things together we have a really good time.

Participant 10: The first word that came to mind was failing. The program feels like its failing. I'm in my fourth year here at school and my freshman year it started off. We had faculty fellows that came around and brought desserts and actually stopped in rooms and wanted to interact with residents and talk to them. And now it's just like quarantined. I think we have a faculty group of six or seven in my area. And we had [a social science professor] come up the last time. It's really disappointing when the staff is being talked to about the importance of faculty fellows and it's not or doesn't seem like its being reciprocated on the other end. Maybe the faculty fellows don't feel like it's as important. So I ranked it as a 4.

Participant 11: I put unprepared and awkward: unprepared because the first meeting comes kind of early in the year and we're still trying to get ourselves settled in. Then all of sudden we have to set up a program with people who half of them want to be there and half of them don't really. Awkward because I think we understand the concept of it but it's hard to relay why a program like this is important to residents. So, I think they see it as kind of pointless. And I rate it a 5 because of I see the idea of the program and I think it's a good one but it's hard to get students out there.

Participant 9: I think it could be great; we just need the right people and the right tools to create this program and gain interest to put on great activities for the residents. If we get the residents to actually be interested in the program then it would probably be a lot better but right now it's kind of like a slow burn kind of thing.

You have no one interested and then the certain residents that are, faculty aren't responding for it to be a success.

Participant 1: I think it's a Resume booster to be quite honest. The PI asked for clarification on it being a booster for whom and the response was: for faculty. It just seems like they come find us or yeah they say they're interested but really it's just another thing they put on their Resume. Um the guys and girls [students], I'm guessing, feels like faculty don't really care. I mean it's just another program that they're [faculty] here and trying to talk to us but really again to the whole thing; we only get to see them once or twice a year. Where if it's their faculty member, I know they're busy, but if they could make it once a month even, that is six to what nine times a year. That's a lot better than that once or twice.

Participant 9: Do you all do tours of your building, something like an EIU Cribz kind of thing where you show how the students live during House Calls?

Group: Uh-huh/ Yeah

Participant 9: Well last semester when we [RAs] did it, we took them down to my floor.

My floor is the [quiet] so my guys keep their doors cracked. So when I knocked and they opened it up and the resident was like "hey, here's my room". The resident wanted to show this faculty fellow his room and everything. So the faculty fellow turned and looked at me and said 'So what's that over there... how come this room is set like this', asking me all type of questions versus going into the residents room and learning about him. It's just like their comfort zone is with the RAs and not the students.

The PI noticed the frustration while the participant told their story by the tone of voice used. The participant also found much validation from group afterwards as they approved with head nods.

**Research Question #3 asked: How can this program be improved in future semesters?**

Focus group questions related to the third research question were as follows.

1. How does the Faculty Fellows program meet the objectives set for this program by the department? (What are the learning objectives/outcomes of the program)
2. What successes have you had as a member of this program?
3. How can this program be improved in future semesters?

*How does the Faculty Fellows program meet the objectives set for this program by the department (What are the learning objectives/outcomes of the program)?*

Participant 9: I would say like having residents bring the classroom teaching to their daily lives. They are interacting with faculty outside of the classroom but it just seems like it's just a title right now. Like we see that it could happen but it's not right now.

Participant 6: I think even maybe it's to try to make the residents feel comfortable in asking professors questions and in having them seek out professors but I don't know, I mean that could be a learning objective but I don't think that that works. I don't think that, that's in place and that's actually followed through.

Participant 7: I'm sorry is there a list of what the learning objectives are?

Participant 2: Problem number 1

PI notices that after this question was asked, many looked to the researcher to provide an answer. The researcher posed the questions back to the group and they all began to sigh of relief and mumbled. Someone then stated, 'I was gonna say what are they talking about; we have no learning objectives'.

Participant 1: See that's what I think it is! There are no learning objectives because we don't... it seems like we're fed up with the program to begin with. Because, like it was stated earlier, it's another thing on our to-do list really and it only happens once or twice a year. So, they're [Housing Professionals] not really caring as much for us to put that effort into a learning objective end.

*What successes have you had as a member of this program?*

Participant 2: Like it would be key to get faculty involved and listen to everybody. Like some people would have problems and their guys would just come and sit there and be awkward or just not talk. So obviously you need professors that are going to be involved but the one time I've actually seen the faculty fellows program work was last year when I was in [residence hall]. Because we actually got them [faculty] involved and they stayed involved because they participated in all of our programs.

*How can this program be improved in future semesters?*

Participant 6: So I think maybe just utilizing more of our resources to try to find people. Or making it more widespread; like I don't know how the professors even find out about it. Maybe making it a more known thing because I know that there are professors that would really love this interaction. So I think just trying to find a better way of spreading the word about how the program runs.

Participant 11: I think um, instead of just starting out with House Calls, it would help a little bit to invite them to a Hall Council program or even like a business meeting because that way they would at least see the residents more in their natural state. Because when there's a program that just focuses around them, I think [the

relationship] is kind of forced at first and then just allow them to establish a little personal relationship with the residents would help beyond just throwing them in together.

Participant 3: Going along with the emails and things like that, I think more personal interactions. Like actually, there are [faculty offices] all around campus, get something into those offices saying this is what the program is, here is what worked in the past, here's what didn't work well and stuff. Maybe get like pictures of faculty with residents um having these House Calls and having fun and then put those in there. Get some form of flier or pamphlet out there. And also, I don't know who was saying it before but have residents nominate a professor.

Participant 1: It just seems, and I hate to do this and throw it out there because it creates more work for the RAs, but it seems like in order to get a faculty fellow member per floor so that they could work just with that floor, the easiest way to do that would be for the RA to go find a faculty member...

Participant 1: And going off that, not to [bad mouth] anyone official or things like that but we know the residents, I think better than anyone else (head nods throughout the group). So in order for someone to say well I want to participate in this and not even have to go through a meeting or interview or anything it's just well whoever wants to participate comes and then majority of their time [with us] they're conversing with each other instead of the residents.

The researcher caught a portion of what was being thrown out there by the participant and presented a follow up question: 'So do you think an interview process or some type of process for faculty members could be useful'?



Group: Yes

Participant 2: If the program continues to function how it is now then yeah. I mean if we're basing it off of what he said, which I agree and think it's a great idea for the RAs to be able to pursue them out. But if it's gonna continue to be done by whoever saying that I'm interested in it, okay well great you're interested in it; now go through an interview process to show more than you're just gonna be interested because six months down the road you need to be a lot more than interested in the program.

Participant 5: I feel like this could easily fit into RA training even like one of the last days we can have that time to where we are gonna choose our faculty fellows. And we could informally meet a lot of them [faculty fellows]; then the RAs and Pro-Staff would have a say.

Participant 6: I feel like it just needs a semester for someone to take the time to develop it. Like, I mean even each building has its own perspectives on it. Last year what we would do with our faculty fellows is so different from what they do over in the [residence hall]. Because one place would be an 'Oh, we have to meet with them once a semester and be there for House Calls'. Another building is like 'Oh, well you have to email them and they have to come to your programs'.

The researcher realized that for the second time, someone had stated "choice" versus "told" so a follow up question was presented: "The faculty fellows are more forced"?

Participant 1: Yes

Participant 2: I agree with the umbrella thing. The way it's set up now it is set up like its two different programs. You choose or your students can choose but I don't know

about many of you but I don't have many come back and say 'Hey, I really wanna have lunch with this guy'.

Group: Laughs

Participant 2: I know U of I has a successful program but because they are bigger they can offer rewards to the faculty that we can't. We need to have incentives.

The researcher asks for clarification: 'for students or for faculty'.

Participant 2: For the faculty...even if we give them a seven day meal plan or 100 dining dollars, because they have to bring their lunch to their office and sit in there to eat.

Participant 2: You have to give them something; I mean that's just how it is.

Participant 7: I just think that there's a lot of negativity when it comes to this program. I mean if we [RAs] were trained and taught to look and speak on the benefits of this program instead of it feeling like it's another thing on our plate. But I think that if we actually have the entire department presents this program with a positive attitude then we would have a better outcome.

Group: Head Nods

### **Pro-Staff**

Professional Staff members (Pro-Staff) are full time professional hall directors and/or master's level graduate assistants working within the Housing and Dining department. The titles associated with them are Resident Directors(RD), which are the full-time, Master degree Student Affairs professionals and Associate Resident Directors(ARD), which are the graduate assistants completing requirements for the College Student Affairs degree. The researcher particularly interviewed one ARD and 5 RDs. The RDs are currently the liaison between the Housing operation and Faculty

Fellows. These individuals are required to meet with their Faculty Fellows' Team Captain once a month in reference to the activities and program improvement within the building.

Research Question #1 asked: What are the perceived roles of the Faculty Fellow?

Focus group questions related to the first research question were as follows.

1. What is a Faculty Fellow?
2. What is the purpose of the Faculty Fellows program?

*What is a Faculty Fellow?*

Participant 5: My definition...through my experiences at Eastern, I think that it's

basically a faculty member who volunteers to sort of um,...serve as an resource or as an extra...I don't know if I can define it. ... I guess I'm struggling because I know what they are supposed to do versus what I see. But I would say that it is a faculty member who is obviously volunteering their time to be available as a resource to staff mainly as it would benefit residents but also somebody to come in and engage with and sort of break down those barriers of faculty being hard to talk to you or unwilling to work with you and those types of things.

Participant 4: To me a faculty fellow is any sort of professor at the university who is

willing to volunteer some time outside of the classroom to come in and spend time with the students. I know that one of the main pieces of the program that we do is the House Calls but I feel like, you know, if they are going to just do the House Calls then it's kind of just like the RAs that are only here for duty... So the faculty fellows that I've worked with that have been the best are those that are

willing to sort of do the above and beyond piece because I feel like that's really where the most significant connections with students are occurring.

Participant 1: I think a faculty fellow is a faculty member that's a liaison between the academic world and the residence life aspect; someone who comes in and really meets the students where they are in their residence hall... Um it's really just that mentor that sort of (pause) like I said that liaison so it's just kind of that in between.

Participant 2: A faculty fellow, typically, is a professor that volunteers to be a part of the residence hall community for the year. Um sometimes it was actually staff members from other offices as well but usually it's a faculty member or one of the higher-level administrators as well.

Participant 6: Um in my opinion, faculty fellow is someone who volunteers their time to come into the halls and interact with students and staff.

*What is the purpose of the Faculty Fellows program?*

Participant 5: I think the biggest push is to bridge the gap between residence halls and academics so that there are more of a sense of living within a community that you're still engaged with your academic side whether that's how u interact with your peers or just studying within your community. Also to allow... like I said break down those barriers to give students the opportunity to communicate with faculty members within a non-structured setting. In my opinion, in regards to Housing and Dining, [the purpose] is sort of to integrate that academic learning into the communities and gain some of that support between faculty and the residence staff.

Participant 3: The purpose is to unite both faculty members and students outside the classroom experience.

Participant 4: Um I really do think that [uniting faculty members and students] quite simply comes down to giving students an opportunity to connect with faculty and staff at the university... I feel like very few actually take the time to get to know the faculty outside of the classroom um, and this definitely provides that opportunity for them. Um, you know the Faculty Fellows involved isn't always going to be their teachers but hopefully they can make the connections and that will benefit the student. I also think that it's a good opportunity for faculty to see what student life is like. Um, you know, they [faculty members] see students coming into their classrooms and sometimes office hours to engage with them and talk with them; interact with them but I feel like those interactions are gonna be very different from if they show up at a student's door um or when they show up for a meal with those students.

Participant 1: I think the purpose of the program, I mean, obviously we know that for a student to truly be what we want them to be, which is in engaged, um, and a lot of that engagement comes from interaction outside of the classroom with the people that they see inside of the classrooms. So the faculty members come into the residence halls, making that relationship hopefully help them realize that: 'Oh I may have someone that I can talk too'. 'Oh I'm more comfortable going to this person and seeing them during their office hours'. Hopefully indirectly, it's going to help in that you know if I'm a student and I see a faculty member in the hall

and there are a pretty cool kid then I will be able to go to another faculty and say oh this faculty member was cool so I'm sure this one is too...

Participant 6: I think that departmentally, the purpose of the program is to get the faculty more integrated with the students. Allow the students to have a connection with faculty outside of the classroom, which studies supports and shows um. I think in each area, it may be a little bit different what the purpose is. I think in some areas it's a very programmatic program or initiative, in other areas it's a resource and quite honestly in other areas I think it's just a program.

Research Questions #2 asked: What is the overall effectiveness of the current Faculty Fellows program?

Focus group questions related to the second research question were as follows.

1. What barriers do you believe exist that prevent students from interacting with faculty within the residence halls?
2. What barriers exist that prevent staff members from interacting with faculty?
3. What barriers do you believe exist that prevent the professional staff members and faculty members collaboratively working to create the integrative experience?
4. What are some preconceived notions about faculty concerning the Faculty Fellows program?
5. What are some preconceived notions about students
6. What are your perceptions about the Faculty Fellows program?

*What barriers do you believe exist that prevent students from interacting with faculty within the residence halls?*

Participant 5: Um I think that it's hard for students to understand why necessarily this is something that we do. The House Calls program [is hosted] early on in the semester to incorporate them as a group and I don't think that students fully understand the importance of that or what that really means. I think that they see it as another activity um and if they happen to know the professor great. I haven't seen a lot of investment from the students with that. (pause) I think it's hard because... it's hard if the staff doesn't necessarily buy into the idea the way that it's presented; it will be harder for them to connect with residents and residents understand why this is important... I think the biggest thing is that there are no direct connection between the faculty that are assigned and communities that are assigned to faculty. Like it is so random that it doesn't make sense; for a biology faculty member to be assigned to a community of mostly education majors or finance majors or you know something to that aspect if that makes sense.

Participant 3: Sometimes, I think students don't understand the point or don't see it as advantageous for their student careers. Also, while in class, students understand their role with the faculty; they are to receive information and interact through asking questions. When we bring faculty to the residence halls, especially those who the students may not have for classes, they become uncomfortable in the new interaction.

Participant 4: Um, I feel like it really varies. I feel like you know with House Calls, it is getting faculty up to their rooms...and it always seems like a very short interaction and I don't feel like students open up too much. It will be an occasional question that they [students] really get engaged and open up and talk

about some stuff but I don't feel like that always occurs with the House Calls piece. I feel like more happens with the Charleston Chews, where they sit and have a meal or presenting or participating in a program less intrusive within the residence hall...

Participant 1: The faculty members are older, the students do not think they understand them...the faculty members think it is awkward to walk into the student's homes...think about how we feel walking down a hall of a building we are not familiar with...it's strange!

Participant 6: I think the biggest one is intimidation. They [students], some of them want nothing to do with a faculty member outside of the classroom. You're my teacher, that's all you are; I don't want to connect with you outside of the classroom um and don't come into my living environment. I feel like that's a lot of the feedback that we've gotten over the past several years. I think time is a big issue. And also, I think depending on the discipline, some of them don't... um I don't know if it's don't want to connect or don't feel ethically able to have that connection with the students outside of the classroom.

*What barriers do you believe exist that prevent the professional staff members and faculty members collaboratively working to create the integrative experience?*

Participant 5: I think part of it is that we [Pro-staff members] don't get to help plan how the program is. We don't get to have a say on the expectations of what the program looks like. We are just told this is what you have to do. But if you are trying to make a long term program successful, um I think that something like the [Faculty Fellows program], staff has to be motivated by having buy in, like they



have to feel invested. Like there are no processes of development of a relationship. I understand that faculty has summers off and everything but if they were like assigned in the Spring semester for the fall, even at the end, then that would give you a chance to use the summer at least for email communication or to set goals or to schedule things so much further in advance than the last minute or to force certain programs. It's the whole forceful thing that I think is the biggest barrier.

Participant 3: Our schedules, for one. Faculty's schedules leave them with evenings free (unless teaching a night class)-time they spend with families, grading papers, or unwinding...I think they rarely want to return to campus for an evening program.

Participant 1: Faculty do not understand fully what we do and we do not understand how they work. We, as a field, need to break down this barrier but I am not sure all parties are always willing. Another one would be that our time frames do not always match up either (ex: having to move the [residence halls] House Calls program back to convenience faculty but inconvenience the directors of that building). I know that last time we talked about this [program], we were trying to go with the faculty really spear heading it.

Participant 2: I'd say for grads, it's less than us because I know that [my supervisor] does more of that than I do. I'm just kind of there for back up for House Calls and those sort of things. I think it was difficult last year because we kept getting [faculty members] added or dropped so that was really hard for her to follow up with them and to get them divided evenly. But I feel like it's another task and another thing to do. So I feel like it may get lost in the shuffle sometimes as far as

following up with that and making sure that the RAs are actually using them for programs and even Charleston Chews...

Participant 6: I think that it's a forced relationship and it's not... forced relationships are really hard. Um, I know we force our student staff and our residents to have a forced relationship but, um, I think that's different because they live together and interact on a more regular basis. I think for professional staff and faculty, it could just be that we don't understand each other. We don't understand each other's disciplines, we don't understand what their professional responsibilities are and they in turn just see us as house moms and those sort of things. Um so I think that's really hard because we're not on an equal sort of professional level, I guess if that makes sense.

*What are some preconceived notions about faculty concerning the Faculty Fellows program?*

Participant 5: I appreciate that there are faculty members who are willing to be engaged and are willing see the importance of integrating classes into the residence halls because I do think that is important. I just don't necessarily know if we go about it the right way... So, I think generalizing my own feelings and conversations that I have had with my colleagues, we feel like some [faculty members] might feel the same way that we do; they are forced and there's not a connection...

Participant 4: Um (as in my own personal) honestly like I feel like it's hard to say. You know I feel like the only preconceived notion that I sort of have which isn't always true is that faculty more so than what we are use to kind of end their day at

five o'clock and I feel like that perception only comes from me making the assumption that most of them [professors] probably have families now

Participant 1: Um I think as (that's a hard one); I think as an RA um, they have the perception that the faculty are more invested in what's going on in the students' classroom than they are outside...

Participant 2: I feel like the ones that sign up are the ones more willing to interact with the residents. Um, I am prepared for them to be kind of awkward coming in. You know, I really don't know what the faculty are told about this. So I just know what we've been told, so maybe, I don't know if there's some kind of not miscommunication, but just not the same instructions. And I know that they've [housing staff] been trying to work more with [the chair] this year and I think that's been good but I mean I don't know since I don't go to those meetings. So we're kind of, I feel like we're in the dark with some things.

Participant 6: Well, I think that, and a lot of this is coming from second hand knowledge, either what people have shared with me or my own interactions with faculty fellows, but I know that even when I met with my team captain and she has shared, 'It's hard for us to come to things in the beginning of the year because our department expects us to be on retreats'... So it's a very restricted opportunity to be able to engage them with our students.

*What are your perceptions about the Faculty Fellows program?*

Participant 5: Um (pause) there are some directors who are very good with going in and telling their staffs this is what needs to happen and helps their staff create buy-in. They partner up with their faculty member, and they communicate with them and

invite them to things. But I also think that it is easy to talk something like that up whether it happens or not. So I think that we can say that we are emailing them or our RAs are emailing their team person and that we are inviting them and doing things. I have invited mine to things that are going on and the response is not overwhelming; the response is not there. I mean in the three years that I have been working with the faculty fellows program; I have always struggled getting them to come to events and programs and do things past open house, and even when they do it's just awkward. I mean we are told to play games or just talk or have food and I feel like that's not productive. And If I knew of a more productive way to engage them then I would've done it. Um, but I think that perceptions are that we are supposed to be doing this great thing and taking them [faculty] to meals and really getting to know them and honestly, I really don't think that's happening. I mean you can talk a good game but if you really broke it down and looked at...students aren't showing up, faculty aren't showing up, directors in the beginning you get excited and you connect with your people and then the middle and end of the semester happens and it's so much going on and it's hard too. My perception is that it's hard for faculty towards the end of the semester to make time in the evenings to come to programs where one or two students may talk to them or have to push their limits to talk to a large group which is their deal but um...it's just frustrating. [Faculty Fellows] is a good program and has great intentions and it could be very successful but I think the structure that we have now is very frustrating and it makes me in particular feel like I can never do enough to be successful.

Participant 3: I enjoy the program. I enjoy what it is supposed to do and I'm working on making sure that it's realized, like the goals of the program are realized. Like I mentioned with some of the programs that we have, it worked well[for staff members] to say this is what we are doing; it's always on Wednesday at 9 o'clock. Can you be there at least one Wednesday? Um, we'll probably do the same thing next semester, but [try to] build in also what are [faculty] ideas and what do they wanna see for the program.

Participant 4: Um, I think that in theory the program is a great idea. Um (pause), I don't know how much I actually buy into the House Calls piece of it. I mean I think that's...um I think that is a good way to sort of force an interaction cause it seems like (as I talked about earlier), I see the most value come from other things outside of the House Calls so you know if I could cut that and create other opportunities outside of the House Calls I think that it would be better off overall.

Participant 1: I think it's a good program; I really do. Um, I think in order for it to fully work honestly, it's going to have to be a Student Affairs program...Um, I mean in theory it's a really great program. It would be really nice if we could give some incentive to our faculty members for doing it or maybe even interview them so it's a privilege to do it... You know so having a more integrated learning process.

Participant 2: We're told here's the programs that you're RAs need to do, here is the program you need to do; you need to get them engaged on the floors, you need to get them not in the residence rooms but knock on doors kind of meet the residents where they are. Um and try to incorporate them as much as possible into your community. But I don't know what the faculty fellows are told...

Participant 6: I think that having the department focus on getting the faculty to interact with the students where they are, where they live, is a good generalized focus. I think that the purpose of some of the faculty fellows is very programmatic in some areas and I think that works in some areas and that's great. I feel like maybe there needs to be a little bit more guidance coming from the Housing aspect of things. Because I know we want it to be faculty influenced on what they do and what they participate in but I think that we have more of those skills to program, to initiate communication to do a lot of that stuff. Not saying that they're not good communicators and stuff like that but they just don't really understand the beast and so they can't, they don't know what to initiate, they don't know what to suggest or um how to interact with the students.

Research Question #3 asked: How can the Faculty Fellows program be improved in future semesters?

Focus group questions related to the research question were the following.

1. How does the Faculty Fellows program meet the learning objectives set for this program by the department (What are the learning objectives/outcomes of the program)?
2. How can this program be improved in future semesters?

*How does the Faculty Fellows program meet the learning objectives set for this program by the department (What are the learning objectives/outcomes of the program)?*

Participant 5: If we do [have learning objectives] I don't know what they are (laugh). I know that there are expectations and goals but I can't recite them to you because once again this is a program that I feel is more so this is what you will do versus

let's process and philosophize like we have everything else in our work life. But I also too think that they need to be beneficial to the students. Not, we need this program to make it look good that we are integrating learning but actually thinking about what is benefiting the students and what the students actually need and want in that area. I feel like we do a really good job at meeting students' needs facility wise through [satisfaction] surveys but when it comes to actually meeting their needs in terms of professional development we don't listen.

Participant 3: The learning objectives are too... well, I kind of mentioned uniting the students and faculty outside of the classroom experience. Um, to help students realize that faculty members are available outside of the classroom hours, um, to break down that barrier that faculty member is someone that only grades their paper but can be there for them um to answer those questions and things like that. Um, to see the faculty member as a person (laugh), someone who does play games, someone who does have a life outside of the classroom to make the faculty member be more approachable to the student and vice versa.

Participant 4: I think I sort of hit on them with one of your questions before. I think for the students, we really want them to make that connection with faculty and it really should help them connect with the university... Um, I think that in addition to that, you know, I mean I would never say that this is a learning objective because it doesn't happen as often, but I mean, I would hope that the sort of ideal outcome to that would be that our students would be able to connect with some mentors within their field. Um, and it's so hard because we don't have themed housing or anything like that so we can't just assign faculty from a certain area to

work with students that are going into a certain area or going into their field that they specialize in. So, I don't know that our system is ever going to be set up like that to where that will be happening and so it's going to be very hit or miss. Um, other learning outcomes..., I feel like those are the two most basic and easy ones to identify.

Participant 1: One of the learning outcomes are helping with the theory of engagement that we all know so well. Um I think one is really to help the faculty get to know the students as well as having professionals building that relationship for networking use you can say. Um... I think those are the two biggest things engagement and networking cause that I mean is kind of overarching.

Participant 2: Gosh (laugh). That's probably one of those things that we probably got in training and I don't remember anymore. I think it's just the departmental goal; raising the floor gpa's and raising the building gpa's, that 3.0 goal. That would be the number one goal. I'm sure there's other goals or learning outcomes that I don't clearly know and we probably learned it back in training in August and I probably don't remember it (laugh). I'd have to go back in [the training] binder and look at it. There are so many learning outcomes for so many things that I don't even... I can't keep it straight, but I know we have that 3.0 goal in line.

Participant 6: I don't know that we do. I mean if we do, I don't know that I know what they are, quite honestly. I think we have a lot of outcomes we would like to see. I don't think that we ever established learning objectives, um, which might be helpful with getting the program to feel a little more valid, I don't know. Yeah, I



don't think I can answer that because I don't know any learning objectives, or if there are any...

*How can this program be improved in future semesters?*

Participant 5: I think there needs to be a better understanding from the faculty sense on how they feel they can benefit students in a program like this, and also how [faculty] can benefit from a program like this; because this can help them in their sort of classroom development and service learning projects. I mean if you want to talk about true integrative learning, like I'm going to apply what I learn in my classroom to my daily life, then you need to provide them with mentors and resources that feed that need and meet that criteria. It doesn't make sense to me to just put a bunch of random people together just for the sake of putting them together and hoping that something happens. I mean, yeah, we are working with millennials. Everything has to have a purpose, everything has to benefit them, and we're not catering to that by telling them, 'Oh you'll understand later why it's important for you to connect with people outside of your major'. They're not going to make time in their week to go meet with someone else about something that's completely unrelated. They are focused; they have things to do...they have to work, they have to study. I really think it has good intentions. I think its success and failures are group dynamics and they fall back on everyone and we have to find something that works. My biggest concern is just the students. I mean it's been more work on the faculty, staff and RAs and even the administrative staff than it has been on the students this whole time which we are supposed to be

benefiting and doing this for them, and to me that should say a lot about the integrity of the program and it really needs to be reconsidered.

Participant 3: Um, I would say definitely more advertisement. Um, also just more initiative from the faculty members, like I know that they already do a lot, but for this program to be a success it would really need a little bit more commitment and dedication on their part, and then also I would say just more open communication...

Participant 4: Um, honestly, one of the things that I would like to see happen, especially in the areas who have a lot of freshmen students, is quickly at the very beginning like August or September and I know that it's going to be a challenge because we have [student orientation] events going on at that time, But I would love to see the faculty have an opportunity to engage with students before they really get going into their classes to talk to them about, you know, what are your preconceived notions about what college is like and what college classes are like and what do you need to do to help yourself to be successful as a college student. To really sort of prepare before they step foot into the classroom for what to expect and really to sort of establish them and say here is what you need to do to basically pass your classes and be successful. Um, I think that individually those conversations occur but I think it would be so much better if those conversations could be incorporated into this program, where the first weekend before classes begin, we get some of our faculty members to come in and we do like a panel of questions and answers and something like that.

Participant 1: Good question. I think what I would say would be successful for this program would be for faculty members to really want to get into the halls. So even in the beginning of the year, I think that's where a lot of the disconnect is, at times, cause it seems like it's always a hard program to get started in the beginning. We in Residence Life are busier than ever in the very beginning and they're busy with starting classes and things like that. So, I think getting them there in the very beginning, having them come to different programs, you know and kind of making that cooperative and the more they're around the more comfortable students are. I think one of the hard parts is that [students] see them at move-in and don't see them again until House Calls and then we try to get them out for maybe finals snacks.

Participant 2: Well, it would be taking that radical step that we talk about in classes and those sort of things with having those living and learning communities where they actually have students of the same major living with [each other], which I don't entirely agree with because in my mind, we had some in undergrad (they were engineering floors and a nursing floor) and I felt like I would never want to because I felt like I wanted to be around different people; but I can see how having that kind of community would really make something like this [program] successful because you can actually get the professors from that specific program to the residence without having all of these different residents with different majors. Maybe the professors could come in for academic purposes on the floor for tutoring and those sorts of things.

Participant 6: Um, well I think that it starts with the recruitment process and I think that there's a better way to recruit quite honestly. So, I think that we're going about getting faculty involved in the wrong way. I think we need to get our students invested in getting faculty involved. Um, those who have jumped on board, mid-year/mid-semester, those are the right ones. Those are the ones that are in it for the right reason because a student asked them and they're invested in the students, as opposed to it being sent out over a listserv or faculty senate. Um, those are important as well but I think that if we really want the student investment and the student involvement, the recruitment has to start at the student level with them asking faculty members. Um, I think there needs to be a little bit of a screening process or application process so that we know that we're getting people who are in tuned with our learning objectives, our purpose, our Housing's core values; are they attuned to the core values of the department? If they don't, do they need to be part of the program, I'm not sure. However, I would like to see the staffs connecting during student staff training. Do half a day team builders you know, get rid of the RA Olympics or whatever and spend that half a day with our faculty fellows connecting, doing team builders with them, really getting to know them. I think that's a big part of the disconnect in the halls and with the staff members. I also think that we need to be more streamlined with our program. I think there's a lot of 'Okay that's fine. Oh yea whatever!' That goes on when we talk about faculty fellows as opposed to 'Here's the program'. 'Does it meet our learning objectives, does it meet our purpose?' 'Okay, then yes, you can do it'. We don't have an evaluation process. I think that we have relied on informal assessment for

the past four years, I mean 3.5 [years]... I think that might help solidify the program. It's a concrete initiative that's supported by the University, that's supported by both academic and student affairs, um, and that's part of the politics of a University; you know having some of that formal documentation. So, I think this thesis is really gonna help a lot with starting to get some of that formality. But I think there's a lot more that still needs to happen with the formality of the program.

*Undergraduate Students*

Research Question #1 asked: What are the perceived roles of the Faculty Fellow?

Focus group questions related to the research question were as follows.

1. Can you tell me about the types of interactions that you have?
  - a. What is a faculty fellow? Charleston Chew?
  - b. What is the purpose of the Faculty Fellows program?
2. What is the role of faculty on a college campus?

*Can you tell me about the types of interactions that you have?*

Participant 1: None. Well, I work with faculty so that's about it

Participant 2: Yeah, I'm in a club where one of the faculty members advise but that's all

*What is a faculty fellow? Charleston Chew?*

Participant 3: It's like a faculty member that kind of sponsors your floor kind of, right?

Participant 2: Faculty members that are assigned to your floor that come to visit

Participant 4: It's when a RA takes a staff member out to lunch

*What is the purpose of the Faculty Fellows program?*

Participant 3: To get the faculty more involved in the halls

*What is the role of faculty on a college campus?*

Participant 4: An instructor

Participant 1: My teacher

Research Questions #2 asked: What is the overall effectiveness of the current Faculty Fellows program?

Focus group questions related to the second research question were as follows.

1. What are your perceptions of your interactions with faculty outside the classroom?
2. Do students have an interest in building relationships with faculty?
3. What barriers exist that prevents residents from interacting with faculty members entering the residence halls to create the integrative experience?

*What are your perceptions of your interactions with faculty outside of the classroom, particularly with the Faculty Fellows program?*

Participant 1: I don't understand the point of it. If a student wants to make that connection with an advisor or a teacher, they're gonna do it on their own time. They're not gonna do it over a semester where the faculty shows up two or three times. I don't go out of my way to make a connection with someone from another department that isn't in my classes. That's pointless. It's awkward for students and teachers

Participant 2: I do know some faculty that enjoy the Charleston Chews, especially my chemistry teacher. He had a bunch of RAs in his class and like five of them asked him to go on one and he was so excited. He likes to see the residence halls and meeting people. It could've been awkward for the residents but he said he was having a good time.

Participant 4: Charleston Chews seems like another forced requirement where the students aren't getting anything out of it.

Participant 1: I'm curious, what are the requirements when this was instituted, what were the original thoughts as to how this would benefit students. Do you know? That's what I wanna know?

*Do students have an interest in building relationships with faculty?*

Participant 1: Some. Most of the students don't

Participant 4: I feel that the ones that do are looking out for the future job or just a better grade

Participant 1: Resume

*What barriers exist that prevents residents from interacting with faculty members entering the residence halls to create the integrative experience?*

Participant 4: Going off what Participant 1 said earlier, you got your class and work environment and then you have your personal environment and it's a lot different. I mean, I'm not gonna be cursing and telling all these different stories in the classroom. I take classes much more seriously.

Participant 1: I don't know another way of putting it other than awkward because you always perceive your teachers or instructors as just that. You don't see them as a friend or someone you would invite into your home. I think it's really awkward to see teachers walking around that I may or may not have ever had. It's just weird. Students can't be themselves...I can't be myself if you're bringing the classroom to me.



Researcher: Well, do you all think it would be different if there was some connection to the floor. One of you stated earlier that it was just some random person that I had nothing to do with my program. Do you think that would make a difference?

Participant 4: If it was someone in my program, I think it would be awkward; the same way

Participant 2: I think it would make it a little more comfortable if you had a physics faculty member with a whole bunch of physics majors but still I think it would be an awkward experience, but I feel like it would be a little better than one you don't know at all.

Research Question #3 asked: How can this program be improved in future semesters?

Focus group questions related to the third research question were as follows.

1. How have you benefited from this engagement outside the classroom or program?
2. How can this program be improved in future semesters?

*How have you benefited from this engagement outside the classroom or program?*

Participant 1: I haven't

Participant 3: Well, I went to House Calls for a little bit when they were in my building and I talked to all of the Faculty Fellows but I don't know. Just cause even when we were at the tables, they were with their floors and they weren't talking to the faculty they were kind of just talking to their friends.

Participant 2: I don't think I've benefited that much but there were like not that many faculty but our whole floor came because our RA said come to this. So it was all

of these people and one faculty so five people talked to the faculty and everyone else did their own thing.

*How can this program be improved in future semesters?*

Participant 4: It can't be

Participant 1: Do away with it.

Participant 3: I don't know, I'm in Hall Council and I think it would be cool if they came to some of our programs. It would be kind of awkward at first, but then they would get to meet the people. Or maybe come to the buildings more, because they only came for House Calls and that was it. I mean, I didn't know what a faculty fellow was until House Calls.

Participant 2: Maybe assign them with specific majors or something. It would still be different but at least some connections would be made with faculty.

Participant 3: Could it be not assigned maybe not to a floor but a certain subject?

*Faculty*

Research Question #1 asked: What are the perceived roles of the Faculty Fellow?

Focus group questions related to the first research question were as follows.

1. What is a Faculty Fellow?
  - a. What is the purpose of the Faculty Fellows program?
2. How were you recruited or introduced to the Faculty Fellows program?

*What is a Faculty Fellow?*

Faculty 1: Well, it was started by [name of the faculty member], that's my understanding, and I think that the purpose was to just try to have some interaction with students and faculty on the students' turf. Um, so that's how I see the purpose.

Faculty 2: I guess I see it; it's never really been defined for me, so in my own concept I think of it as a good will ambassador type of interaction between faculty and students. Of course we were all students once, so in my mind, I think back to when I was an undergrad. Actually I was here. I didn't do my graduate work here, but I lived in that building on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor, which is where I'm assigned to now, [residence halls]. So I walk in and I look at it like "Oh, wouldn't it have been cool if I was here and professors would have showed up just to say hi, we like you, we're people too, we enjoy getting to know you, we're glad you're here"? I think that's how I view the role, as a way to establish some action and more personal level between faculty and to let students know that we are interested in their well-being and in them being successful.

Faculty 3: Okay. A faculty fellow is basically a faculty member who has volunteered to work with a residence hall. The purpose is really to let the students see faculty members outside of the classroom so that they realize we're real people and they should feel comfortable communicating with us. And also to provide them with any educational needs that they have. In more general terms, for example if you're working with a group of mostly seniors introducing them to graduate school possibilities or if you're working with a group that's having trouble gpa wise, providing them with information about study skills or something along that line.

*How were you recruited or introduced to the Faculty Fellows program?*

Faculty 1: I don't know that I recall. I know that maybe perhaps, my guess is (I don't recall) an email went out asking for people who would be interested in doing it.

And I remember that Move-In day was the first activity that I participated in.

Faculty 2: I don't think I remember. I think maybe an email went out if people were interested and so I responded.

Faculty 3: Actually it was through the Campus Newsletter and they were just looking for volunteers. So I sent an email to whomever it said to.

Research Questions #2 asked: What is the overall effectiveness of the current Faculty Fellows program?

Focus group questions related to the second research question were as follows.

1. What barriers exist that prevents faculty from interacting with residents within the residence halls?
2. What barriers do you believe exist that prevent the professional staff members and faculty members collaboratively working to create the integrative experience?
3. What are your perceptions about the Faculty Fellows program?
4. What pre-conceived notions about faculty interaction with students outside the classroom exist that may impede the overall effectiveness of the program?

*What barriers exist that prevents faculty from interacting with residents within the residence halls?*

Faculty 1: Um, well, everybody is busy but students are busy too. I have felt that there was not a clear foundation laid; it was just volunteered. I know [the current Faculty Fellow chairperson] real well and that's why I volunteered. If I had just seen an email, I probably wouldn't have volunteered if it wasn't somebody I knew because I had no real idea of what the heck it was. So maybe some type of orientation for faculty that are interested. Going to faculty senate meetings and tell them more about it. I don't think it had a very good organization when it started and it was just kind of people who knew other people decided to do it.

Faculty 2: Barriers, well, outside of the classroom, I guess one thing is just not all faculty live here. I don't live here, I'm forty five minutes away, I'm married, I have kids, I have a house, I have a dog, you know. So when my day ends here, I really do need to go back there because I turn into mom you know. I have a fifth grader and a senior in high school. So there are band practices, piano practice, and homework. So it isn't really; it's rarely the case that I could just extend my day here into maybe a night or evening event. If I know enough in advance, I plan ahead and I can make that happen but it's not just something that I could ordinarily do. I suppose maybe during the work day when we're here, in this department, we're fairly busy back to back busy and I think sometimes that's just a difficult thing. You know, you need to have good communication between the people you're linked up to on a floor in the residence hall and be able to access them. I think maybe that's another barrier. I'm not entirely certain from year to year who is that person that I should be contacting; what's your email, how can I communicate with you, how will I find you? That might be helpful so that outside

of those regularly scheduled events, you know like Move-In day, lunch with a whole floor of people, yeah if I had a name and an email that might be good.

Faculty 3: I would say that the biggest area is the time piece. In what I mean by that it's not just people having the time, but often the events that take place in the building start at like 9 p.m. or later. And most faculty members at 9 p.m. are at home and to come back to campus can be more of a challenge for them whereas if it was activities that took place during the day or right after the work time, early evening, I think faculty members would be more likely to participate and would allow students that kind of interaction. And also coming up with ideas that students are gonna be interested in. So that they'll actually come when the faculty members are there.

*What barriers do you believe exist that prevent the professional staff members and faculty members collaboratively working to create the integrative experience?*

Faculty 1: Well actually, I don't have much contact with them. You know, our leader of our group is [name of captain] and I think he does most of that coordinating.

Faculty 2: [Name of captain] is my team captain. She gets emails from them and forwards them on to us.

Faculty 3: Um yea, as you mentioned, I work with [Pro-staff member] and the first semester I thought it was very difficult to um move forward with him. And he had suggested, in the beginning of the semester, that we would meet once a month and I don't believe that happened. So we also talked about topics that our faculty members would be willing to present on, so, I took that information to him and

then nothing happened with it. So, um, I think faculty members were at least willing as far as giving me topics that they could present on or interesting to them; but then moving past that to actually getting something on the calendar. And when I was over there for a Charleston Chew, I asked the RAs about the topics and what had been decided and the RA acted like he didn't know what I was talking about but then [Pro-staff member] was standing there going, 'Yeah, we talked about that'. So, I'm not sure if the connection is being made and as I'm talking about it right now, it's like okay so why didn't we get the RAs and faculty members together and talk about it but that's something I haven't thought about until right then.

*What are your perceptions about the Faculty Fellows program?*

Faculty 1: Well, I have reservations. I think it's a good idea and I really enjoy getting to know some students outside of our department. I've enjoyed going to eat at Taylor Hall. I enjoyed Move-In day. I did not enjoy when we knocked on people's doors with plates of cookies and interrupted their personal time in their rooms. And so, I kind of said I wasn't gonna do that anymore. I didn't feel like they appreciated that. I felt like it was intrusive. I enjoyed Game Night but my biggest concern, I guess, is that I always feel like we're imposing and students are having to prepare something for us rather than a natural get together. And when we go out to eat they don't have to prepare for us and Move-In day is kind of the same way. So my concerns are that, sometimes, I've felt like the activities imposed on students in one or another. [Programs] either invaded their space or caused them to have extra work in fixing something to do for us. It's like let's

find something to do for the faculty. It doesn't mean that it wasn't fun but that's just kind of my concern.

Faculty 2: I like the program! I get the feeling there's a problem under here because you're asking me these questions like how could it be improved. I don't know what other students think of it. I like to go meet people, I like to find out why you're here and what are you interested in. What do you want to do with your life? What made you decide to do that...that's interesting. So I guess, I just think hopefully students can see a person is genuinely interested in them as a person not just a face in the classroom. I guess I think it's an important part; a civic responsibility...does that make sense?

Faculty 3: I think ideally the program is wonderful. To be able to interact with the students outside of the classroom and really interact what we teach into their world and just seeing from the faculty perspective, what's important to them. Because when we did House Calls, every room that we stopped by where there were students in them, it was a video game and to see that's what they like to do, that's where they spend their time, so that we can use that in the classroom to make the connection and make sure they know that we know what their life is like.

*What pre-conceived notions about faculty interaction with students outside the classroom exist that may impede the overall effectiveness of the program?*

Faculty 1: Um, I don't know. We interact with our students all the time in the department. And this is different because its people outside of the department. Maybe there's preconceived notions that we aren't somebody who they can benefit from getting



to know because we can't assist them with their major or something like that. I mean that's just my thought. I enjoy interacting regardless of what department you're [majoring] in. I've learned something from getting to know people in other departments but as far as any preconceived notions about faculty and students, I think there is just some unsureness, at least on my part, about whether or not students really want to get to know us. It's a good idea if they really want it.

Faculty 2: Other than being busy, I can't think of any.

Faculty 3: I would think that some people probably think that when the two groups get together it's gonna be the same: campus and classes. But I don't do that when I get together with the students. I talk to them about what they're gonna do this weekend or what was the last movie you saw. So really making that connection outside of just what students expect faculty members to talk about. Which is gonna be their work, and their classes, and their expectations of students. Moving beyond that to just making the real connection with students.

Research Question #3 asked: How can this program be improved in future semesters?

Focus group questions related to the third research question were as follows.

1. What successes have you had as a member of this program?
2. How can this program be improved in future semesters?

*What successes have you had as a member of this program?*

Faculty 1: Well, I think Move-In Days are great. Last year I couldn't go because we had something going on but I thought that was a natural, logical way to force students and faculty to interact. Like I said, [I liked] joining them for dinner at Taylor. It

was fun for me, I enjoyed it... I don't know if they got anything out of it (laugh). I guess, those are the two activities that I've felt were successful. Like I said, Game Night was fun but I'm not sure if they really wanted to be doing that and if they would've rather be doing something else. I didn't have anything to do so it was fine with me (laugh).

Faculty 2: I enjoyed having a conversation with this one lady, who I don't remember her name. She comes from an urban inner city environment and we had lunch in the beginning of this past year. But she at first didn't really seem to volunteer a lot about the courses she was taking or her major or what she was doing here. Then over the course of that meal, things sort of evolved into her talking about I'm going to double major in, science and math. I want to be an educator, I'm going back into this urban environment where there aren't any opportunities and going back to do something about it. And it's like, well, do that! That's a deal and I sort of felt like in the beginning maybe she didn't wanna get into all of that. She didn't think I cared maybe or didn't trust telling anybody but I guess that was a good thing I felt like. Because when she did open and say all of these things and saw that I was genuine impressed, mostly because I'm terrible at math and science, like you can do both that's really amazing! So I think that was a nice little interlude that I can think back and relate to.

Faculty 3: Actually this semester, probably because it's most recent. Usually our House Calls were just always walking on the floor and visiting students. So I talked to [my pro-staff member] last winter about doing something different with that. So we came up with Faculty Feud and so [the Pro-staff member] put out an online

survey and the students answered the questions and I handed it out to some faculty members. And we played feud, only it was a student's team versus a faculty team. I was so surprised because there were, not only students that were on the team, but so many students that came down just to watch. And of course, we were making fools of ourselves and that was kind of fun. But the students could see that we do other things other than teach. I do like participating in the program. I think Move-In is kind of fun because you not only get to interact with the students but the parents as well. I think having been a first generation student, I think my mother would have really appreciated seeing a faculty member there and, of course, all of the student helpers are wonderful.

*How can this program be improved in future semesters?*

Faculty 1: Well [our captain] and I have talked a little about the things that I'm not comfortable with and he's had some of those same reservations. I think maybe sitting down and laying a better foundation, maybe a committee of students and not just the RAs because maybe they don't know what their people want to do. Maybe they're doing it because they've been told to do it and/or feel like they're supposed to do it. You know, do students want the interactions and if so what types would be enjoyable? Just kind of have a more clear purpose and clear expectations about how it benefits faculty and how it benefits students and whether it's something that both parties want. And if so, that would kind of lead to what kind of activities would actually work. Um, non I think again, my biggest concern is why are we doing it and is it something that students want. What are really the goals of this? Like I belong to WISM [Women in Science and Math]

and I feel a real clear connection with what I'm doing there, and I know how it benefits students and sitting and talking to students outside the major is still very productive for me and for them. I see that more clearly than I do the faculty fellows, so maybe having a clear purpose and really decide if this is something that's needed or is it the form that's needed. Student and faculty interactions are always good but you know like I said with WISM (Women in Science and Math) it's a clear purpose. Its educating, and networking, and helping students understand how this will benefit them by being a part of this organization, and I don't have a clear idea how anyone benefits from participating in Faculty Fellows, other than it's a good idea. Our [captain] is a good guy, bless his heart, he would do anything for students, but like I said, I'm not sure we have a clear idea.

Faculty 2: Maybe as a whole, there's an overall defining, guiding philosophy. I'm not sure if we have that as a whole. I told you what my philosophy of it is but I have no idea if that's the same as anybody else. So, my perceptions of the program might not be what they are supposed to be or they might. Maybe something comprehensive could be helpful. I would like there to be maybe...there seems to be some infrastructure between the team captain and us and I'm sort of hooked up with a person here in this department [name of captain]. I think she's a team captain. I know that she gets emails from somebody, I don't know who that is, and then I get emails and then we find out there are events. I think it would be really good if that infrastructure might extend down to us. Like I said, [getting] names and emails of people from the area that I'm affiliated with. It would be nice

to know what the students think the organization is supposed to be doing. I don't know what they think of it either. For all I know, they think we're a bunch of old people, I really don't know (laugh). So that might be nice. What would they like? Like about a year ago during finals week, I decided to put together a bag of goodies (chocolate, candy) sort of in my own mind thinking I would like that if I was a student, but again, I didn't know a name or who I would go to. So I just went to the front desk and said "Hi, can I give you this". And that was a really neat thing and we've done it again since then because that experience turned out to be so good. Maybe there are other things that students would appreciate and I just don't know what they are. I don't have a mechanism for getting that information. Overall, I think this is a good program, I think it has good intentions and has a good start. I think we need to carry on with this. I don't have any complaints. I think any time you start something you have to work through the kinks and I hope that it's well received on the students' end.

Faculty 3: I think the improvement comes from really having more time in the residence halls. I talk to [my pro-staff member] a little bit about the fact that I think it would be really nice for each faculty member to have a meal card like at lunch time and pick a table to sit down at and talk to the students that are there. Or even if there were some spot in the building where faculty fellows could almost have office hours there and just get to know the students and you know have it to where it's in the middle of the traffic so that when students stop by we can talk to them.

Researcher: Now with that, do you think that faculty members would actually participate in that?

Faculty 3: The interesting thing is that I would say that I'm not sure, but the fact that they volunteer tells me that they do have a strong interest in it for whatever their reasons are. And if it was just a hour or two a week, I could see a lot of them doing that, but if it was something a little more demanding then maybe not. I think there also have to be more awareness for the students about what Faculty Fellows are because there are times when the RA will say she's one of our Faculty Fellows and they kind of look at me like, 'So what's that mean'? But overall I think Eastern is on the right track. It's just kind of what you're doing, studying it to find out how to improve and then taking the time to make those things happen.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, participants from four groups (RA, Professional Staff members, on campus Students, and Faculty) offered responses to each of the items on the focus group and interview protocol (Appendix C-F) in an attempt to help formulate a more concrete description of the Faculty Fellows program. Pseudonyms were provided throughout the text to keep confidentiality and maintain anonymity for members participating within this study. The following chapter will present the emerging themes, discussion, and recommendations for the current study.

## CHAPTER V

### Discussion and Recommendations

Themes emerging from the verbal data gathered using focus groups and individual interviews are interpreted in this chapter. Data from interviews and focus groups were analyzed using constant comparative analysis (Schumacher & Macmillan, 2006), first within groups and then across groups to identify emerging themes. This chapter also provides recommendations to student affairs practitioners for program development and suggestions for further research.

#### *Emerging Themes*

A variety of themes emerged from this qualitative assessment of the Faculty Fellows program, including (1) a lack of understanding and purpose of the program, (2) respondent perceptions and attitudes toward the program, (3) a lack of commitment to the program from all stakeholder groups interviewed, (4) miscommunication about program objectives and processes, (5) accountability issues, (6) barriers preventing program implementation, and (7) lack of perceived benefits. These themes illustrated with representative “voices” from stakeholder groups, Resident Assistants, Faculty Members, Professional Staff members, and Students, are presented below grouped under the research questions posed for the present study.

#### **Research Question #1: What are the perceived roles of the Faculty Fellows?**

Two related supporting themes emerging from the verbal data analysis were a Lack of Understanding about the role of Faculty Fellows, and Confusion about Program Purposes. There seemed to be no consensus across stakeholder groups about what role responsibilities Faculty Fellows were to perform in the residence halls. Similarly, no



agreement was apparent about the place and purpose of the Faculty Fellows program within overall residence life operations.

*Lack of consensus about the role of Faculty Fellows.*—A majority of participants described activities they associated with the role of a Faculty Fellow, but as a group they seemed unable to place the activities into a wider educational framework. Many faculty, professional staff members and resident assistants were able to give a broad definition defining the Faculty Fellow as “a volunteered faculty member who takes time to interact with students within the residence halls”. Students responded to the role of Faculty Fellow more in terms of questions than in terms of statements. “It’s like a faculty member that kind of sponsors your floor kind of, right?”

*Confusion about Program Purposes.*--Confusion about the purpose of the Faculty Fellows program was apparent in participants’ responses. Respondents struggled to provide an unambiguous statement of program objectives. For most, there was a long pause before providing their input.

Professional Staff member 6 started with “I think that departmentally, the purpose of the program is to get the faculty more integrated with the students. Allow the students to have a connection with faculty outside of the classroom, which studies support and show, um. I think in each area, it may be a little bit different what the purpose is. I think in some areas it’s a very programmatic program or initiative, in other areas it’s a resource and quite honestly in other areas I think it’s just a program”.

Faculty 2 said, “I guess I see it, it’s never really been defined for me, so in my own concept I think of it as a good will ambassador type of interaction between

faculty and students. I think I view the role as a way to establish some action and more personal level between faculty and to let students know that we are interested in their well-being and in them being successful.

RA Participant 6 defined it as, “Um...I’ve been told that the purpose of it is for professors to see students in their environment and to get a better understanding of that as well as for the students to benefit from seeing the professor outside of their element of teaching in class”.

The next four themes emerging from the verbal data were consistent across all stakeholders. Respondents ‘voices’ expressed frustration about the variety of perceptions and attitudes toward the program including a feeling of having forced relationships between Faculty Fellows and Residence Life members, a lack of commitment to the program from all stakeholder groups interviewed, and accountability issues. Several respondents questioned the effectiveness of the Faculty Fellows program, and the PI was able to fully engage in conversations and observe the collective frustration among respondents as they discussed their perceptions of the program implementation.

**Research Question #2: What is the overall effectiveness of the current program?**

*Attitude and perceptions toward the program.*— There were varying perceptions and attitudes surrounding the current program. Throughout the RA and student focus groups, several participants found support and confidence in one another and began to get more comfortable with speaking about their experiences within their current positions about the faculty fellows program. Often, undergraduate respondents would look around for validation from other members of the group and nonverbals from their fellows often

served as an inducement to speak. This comfort between participants allowed conversations which offered thick description that supports future program development.

Student #1 stated, "I don't understand the point of it. If a student wants to make that

connection with an advisor or a teacher, they're gonna do it on their own time.

They're not gonna do it over a semester where the faculty shows up two or three times a semester."

At this point, the students seemed to be frustrated with the topic and the meaning behind it. Student 1 further explained, "It's pointless and awkward for students and teachers."

Resident Assistants (RAs) followed that same description when asked to reflect on their thoughts of the program. RAs were asked to rate the program and say the first thing that came to mind about the program to start off the focus group interview.

RA Participant # 11 said, "unprepared and awkward...unprepared because the first

meeting comes kind of early in the year and we're still trying to get ourselves settled by then and all of a sudden we have to set up a program with people who half of them want to be there and half of them don't really [want to be there].

Awkward because I think we understand the concept of it but it's hard to really understand why a program like this is important to residents...So um, I think [students] see it as kind of pointless."

RA Participant #7 followed. "I just think that there's a lot of negativity when it comes to

this program. I mean if we were trained and taught to look and speak on the benefits of this program instead of it feeling like it's another thing on our plate.

But I think that if we actually have the entire department present this program with a positive attitude then we would have a better outcome."

Faculty and professional staff members had similar reactions to the questions asked around the current program. When the PI initially asked to set up interviews with faculty members, many responses were sent with gratitude about taking the time to study this program and helping to make it better. Professional staff members were willing and appreciative of the feedback but had to double check their confidentiality before interviewing. In most interviews, members started with the phrase “ideally or in theory” when asked to share their experiences. They also shared some sort of pause as a way of thinking about the professionalism that comes along with interviewing.

Faculty #2 stated, “I think ideally the program is wonderful”.

Pro-Staff # 4 said, “Um...I think that in theory the program is a great idea”. When

encouraged for more explanation, Pro-staff #2 said, “I feel like it’s another task and another thing to do.

Faculty # 1 began, I have reservations (pause) I think it’s a good idea and I really enjoy getting to know some students outside of our department...My concerns are that sometimes I’ve felt like the activities imposed on students in one way or another; either invaded their space or caused them to have extra work in fixing something to do for us”.

Other participants placed a positive twist to the program and explained “I enjoy the program. I enjoy what it is supposed to do and I’m working on making sure that it’s realized” (Pro-staff #3) and Faculty #2 provided a similar response upon her experiences. “I like the program... I don’t know what other students think of it. I like to go meet people, I like to find out why you’re here and what are you interested in”.

*Lack of commitment to the program.*— Although many participants agreed that there was a lack of interest and buy-in from the students, perhaps the best example of this response occurred when the researcher asked the students about their perceived role of the faculty member. In previous research, Cotten and Wilson (2006) explored the impact of student to faculty interactions and the impact that faculty, student affairs personnel, and administrators alike may use to enhance the impact of college on students. They discovered that since students rarely interact with faculty outside of the classroom, they may identify faculty strictly as features of the classroom and their course-work, rather than as a broader part of the campus community and culture (p. 511).

Student 1 concluded: “I don’t know another way of putting it other than awkward

because you always perceive your teachers or instructors as just that. You don’t see them as a friend or someone you would invite into your home. I think it’s really awkward to see teachers walking around...I can’t be myself if you’re bringing the classroom to me.”

An RA explained, “If we get the residents to actually be interested in the program then it would probably be a lot better but right now it’s kind of like a slow burn kind of thing. You have no one interested and then certain residents that are, faculty aren’t responding for it to be a success.”

Pro-Staff member #5 followed, “You kind of lose interest in trying to make something work that isn’t working... We don’t get to help plan how the program is. We are just told this is what you have to do. Staff has to be motivated by having buy-in...they have to feel invested... You are kind of thrown into it. Like there are no processes of development of a relationship”.

Faculty member #1 tried to give rationale about the lack of interest by stating, “I felt that there was not a clear foundation laid. If I had of just seen an email, I probably wouldn’t have volunteered if it wasn’t somebody I knew because I had no real idea of what the heck it was. I don’t think it had a very good organization when it started and it was just kind of people who knew other people and decided to do it...”

*Forced relationships.* – One universal theme across all stakeholders was that the relationships between faculty, housing staff and students were somehow forced. With participants being able to identify this feeling, some offered reasoning why this relationship felt forced. Faculty members talked about intrusion, Professional staff members discussed having to “pull teeth” to get faculty involved, and RAs and students felt that it was simply awkward but required. The following voices supported this theme best.

RA #1: “... I know that [the Charleston Chew and Faculty Fellows program are] kind of the same and going for the same objective but to me they’re two different programs. And it’s because I have a choice of who I can bring to my residents, whereas the faculty fellows are just picked for us.

RA #2: “...It doesn’t happen, so I mean basically we choose the Charleston Chew candidates and the faculty fellows are placed with us”.

RA # 4: “I mean because in [residence hall] we were told to try to make the professors feel comfortable because it’s awkward for them because they have never seen a res-hall and never been outside of the classroom with students”.

Pro-staff #6: "I think that it's a forced relationship and ...forced relationships are really hard. Um, I know we force our student staff and our residents to have a forced relationship but I think that's different because they live together and interact on a more regular basis".

Pro-Staff # 2: "We're told 'here's the program that your RAs need to do. Here's the program you need to do; you need to get them engaged on the floors, you need to get them, not in the residence rooms, but knock on doors' kind of meet the residents where they are. Um, and try to incorporate them as much as possible into your community'. But I don't know what the faculty fellows are told".

Pro-Staff 5: "I think part of it is that we don't get to help plan how the program is. We don't get to have a say on the expectations of what the program looks like. We are just told this is what you have to do. And in life...many times you are told this is what you have to do and you just do it and get it done. But if you are trying to make a long term program successful, um I think that something like [the Faculty Fellows program], staff has to be motivated by having buy in...they have to feel invested".

Student 1: "I don't know another way of putting it other than awkward because you always perceive your teachers or instructors as just that. You don't see them as a friend or someone you would invite into your home. I think it's really awkward to see teachers walking around that I may or may not have never had. It's just weird. Students can't be themselves...I can't be myself if you're bringing the classroom to me".

Faculty #1: "Well [my captain] and I have talked a little about the things that I'm not comfortable with and he's had some of those same reservations...Maybe [RAs] are doing it because they've been told to do it and/or feel like they're suppose to do it".

*Accountability.* – In previous research, Harper(2008) stated that "Educators, including those in student affairs, must be held more accountable for ensuring students are afforded deep, rich, and challenging learning experiences" (p. 2). Among the various groups within this study, many participants spoke about time being an issue as to why faculty members weren't showing up or socializing with each other [faculty] while being in the halls.

Pro-Staff #4: "We have been doing a really good job with connecting with faculty at least once a month to talk about how can we work with the faculty fellows and connect faculty members with students and what are some programs and that kind of stuff".

Faculty #3: "Um yea, I work with [Pro-staff member] and the first semester I thought it was very difficult to move forward with him. He had suggested in the beginning of the semester that we would meet once a month and I don't believe that happened. So, we also talked about topics that our faculty members would be willing to present on and so I took that information to him and then nothing happened with it...And when I was over there for a Charleston Chew, I asked the RAs about the topics and what had been decided and the RA acted like he didn't know what I was talking about but then [Pro-staff member] was standing there



going yeah we talked about that. So I'm not sure if the connection is being made..."

Pro-Staff #5: "Um... there are some directors who are very good with going in and telling their staffs this is what needs to happen and helps their staff create buy-in. They partner up with their faculty member, and they communicate with them and invite them to things. But I also think that it is easy to talk something like that up whether it happens or not".

Accountability seemed to play a huge role within the discussion with the RA group. The student staff members showed genuine concern about the different programs underneath the Residence Life Academic Initiative committee and thoroughly explained the challenging issues that come with both the Charleston Chew and Faculty Fellows program.

RA #2: You have the faculty fellows who are supposed to be around all the time and you do your Charleston Chews with two [faculty members outside of the program], which are a requirement and then you don't see them anymore. So even if your residents enjoyed having lunch with them, it's over; it's done. You can invite them out again but it doesn't count towards anything so for us as RAs we're not gonna invite the same person twice cause it doesn't count for anything. I mean honestly, you're gonna go out and do your two people and then it's done with.

Stakeholders across the board discussed concerns about the current Faculty Fellows program and how the department could improve for future semesters. The PI posed the question to the stakeholders and four sub-themes developed from those

conversations. The themes included: time, incentives and rewards, form of orientation and learning objectives. These themes were consistent and often served as an opportunity for support to others when speaking, particularly within the focus groups.

**Research Question #3: How can this program be improved for the future?**

*Time.* – Time was considered a barrier to creating an effective Faculty Fellows program. The data collected within the study developed two meanings of the word, “time”. Time was used to describe participant’s thoughts around implementing the program. While others described time as it related to Faculty members being available to create a successful program.

RA #6: “I feel like it just needs a semester for someone to take the time to develop it.

Like, I mean even each building has its own perspectives on it”.

Pro-Staff #4: “You know, I feel like the only preconceived notion that I sort of is that faculty ends their day at five o’clock... most of them probably have families now um because most are middle-aged faculty members so I assume that they are finishing up teaching their classes and then they are going to go home to dinner with their families and that type of stuff”.

Faculty #2: “Well outside of the classroom, I guess one thing is just not all faculty live here. I don’t live here, I’m forty five minutes away, I’m married, I have kids, I have a house, I have a dog, you know. So when my day ends here, I really do need to go back there because I turn into mom you know... it’s rarely the case that I could just extend my day here into maybe a night or evening event. If I know enough in advance, I plan ahead and I can make that happen but it’s not just something that I could ordinarily do...”

Pro-Staff #1: "You know as a staff member, my perception is that they do their teaching and that's where it ends, most of them. Obviously there are some outliers on either side um but in general, just from my perceptions, is that they really focus on getting their work in the classroom done and that's where it stops".

Pro-Staff #6: "I think time is a big issue. I know that even when we're trying to get our faculty to come in for exams snacks they say, 'Oh, we'll love to come in but not late at night'".

Faculty #3: "I would say that the biggest area is the time piece. In what I mean by that it's not just people having the time but often the events that take place in the building starts at like 9 p.m. or later".

*Incentives and/or Rewards.* – The participants spoke a lot about finding ways to get faculty more involved with the program. Housing staff, both RAs and Professional staff members focused on recruitment. These stakeholders wanted to find ways to encourage Faculty members to collaborate with Housing staff. Students wanted to offer tokens of appreciation, knowing that most Faculty members could benefit from something on campus. Faculty, on the other hand, wanted to seek information about the benefits. These individuals wanted to know more about the program. Faculty members were not interested in the numbers, they were more interested in understanding what students were getting from the program; more importantly if they wanted it. More description is provided below.

RA # 2: "I know U of I has a successful program but because they are bigger they can offer rewards to the faculty that we can't. We need to have incentives [for students or faculty]".

RA # 6: "Um, this is just another idea, it may seem farfetched but I'll see what you all think about it. What about if we extended some things to invite their family"?

Pro-Staff #5: "I think there needs to be a better understanding from the faculty sense on how they feel they can benefit students in a program like this and also how they can benefit from a program like this".

Faculty #1: "Just kind of have a more clear purpose and clear expectations about how it benefits faculty and how it benefits students and whether it's something that both parties want".

RA #1: "For the faculty...even if we give them a 7 day meal plan or 100 dining dollars. Because they have to bring their lunch to their office and sit in there to eat".

Pro-Staff 5: "And it doesn't make sense to me to just put a bunch of random people together just for the sake of putting them together and hoping that something happens. I mean yeah, we are working with millennials. Everything has to have a purpose everything has to benefit them and we're not catering to that by telling them that 'oh you'll understand later why it's important for you to connect with people outside of your major'."

*Form of Orientation.* – The PI recognized that participants conversed around the lack of communication about the purpose of the Faculty Fellows program. The researcher also observed many trying to find ways of helping the Faculty Fellows gain a better understanding of what he/she would be a part of after joining the department's initiative. The following statements further describe the ideas presented through focus groups and individual interviews.

RA #7: “Well when trying publicizing this to the faculty, what if you could like invite them for a test run. But instead of being like okay sign up, this is what it’s about providing the opportunity to see it so they are not bound to a commitment before having experienced the program”.

Pro-Staff #6: “I think I personally would really like to see a more formal recruitment screening/application process for our faculty fellows. And I know that the goal in the baby phase of this whole initiative is just to get people involved. And I understand that but I think we are running into a lot of frustrations with just getting people involved as a pose to getting really quality people involved”.

RA # 5: “I feel like this [orientation] could easily fit into RA training even like one of the last days we can have that time to where we are gonna choose our faculty fellows. And we could donate informally like meet a lot of them; then the RAs would have and Pro-Staff would have a say”.

From the conversations with stakeholders, the researcher was able to identify the lack of common language across groups. Conversations are occurring around living/learning communities with Student Affairs practitioners but that language is not being communicated with Academic Affairs in regards to how something like a Faculty Fellows program should work. With that, providing orientation that includes literature around living/learning communities and student engagement could help all stakeholders as they become familiar with the program and the objectives at the beginning of the year.

*Learning Objectives.* – Faculty members began by talking about the absence of a clear and defined goal/purpose for the Faculty Fellows program. With that, both RAs and Pro-Staff members defined what the learning objectives were for the program. There was

no defining answer with this theme. However, it became obvious that the communication within and across the residence life hierarchy was not clear as well. Every group was offered the same question and the following statements explain in greater detail the responses given by those in the same department.

Pro-Staff #5: "If we do [have learning objectives] I don't know what they are (laugh). I know that there are expectations and goals but I can't recite them to you because once again this is a program that I feel is more so this what you will do versus lets process and philosophize like we have everything else in our work life. I don't know what they are but it would be nice to have some. But I also too think that they need to be beneficial to the students".

RA # 7: "I'm sorry is there a list of what the learning objectives are"?

RA #2: "Problem number 1".

The PI noticed the RA group presented sighs of relief and some mumbled and said, 'I was gonna say what are they talking about; we have no learning objectives'.

RA #1: "See that's what I think it is that there are no learning objectives because it seems like we're fed up with the program to begin with. Because, like it was stated earlier, it's another thing on our to-do list really and it only happens once or twice a year. So, the department does not really care as much for us to put that effort into a learning objective end".

Pro-Staff # 3: "The learning objectives are too (pause; trying to create time to think) well I kind of mentioned uniting the students and faculty outside of the classroom experience. Um, to help students realize that faculty members are available outside of the classroom hours. Um, to break down that barrier that faculty

members aren't someone that only grades their paper but can be there for them to answer those questions and things like that".

Pro-Staff #4: "I think for the students we really want them to make that connection with faculty um and it really should help them connect with the university".

Pro-Staff #6: "I don't know that we do. I mean if we do, I don't know that I know what they are quite honestly. I think we have a lot of outcomes we would like to see. I don't think that we ever established learning objectives, which might be helpful with getting the program to feel a little more valid, I don't know. Yeah, I don't think I can answer..."

### *Discussion*

The ultimate objective at the present university is to create an integrative, engaged experience for every student both inside and outside of the classroom. Perry[University's President] promotes lifelong learning and wants to help make EIU the BEST in the nation in the integrated academic and personal development of students (Blair Lord, personal communication, September 30, 2009) The current Faculty Fellows initiative within the Housing and Dining department has been recognized as a great start toward embracing the vision of the University's President. When creating an integrative learning experience for students within a university, those decisions about how to create that initiative should be reflected throughout the organizational structures at the departmental and institutional level (Fried, 2007, p. 4). Participants voiced many opinions on the structure of the program but the comment: "the program does not have a clear foundation" reflects the structure of the current Faculty Fellows program at the departmental and institutional

level. As one of the first steps to creating a partnering relationship across campus, professionals must have an ultimate goal in place, which is student learning.

Student learning can come in various forms but research shows that in order for a student to gain an integrated learning experience, collaboration between academic and student affairs staff members should result in a list of desired outcomes that all stakeholders want to meet. Dungy (2005) suggested that the first steps in achieving success was to have individuals agree on the learning outcomes around programming opportunities and/or initiatives. Several participants, as Professional Staff members, discussed not knowing the learning objectives or outcomes of the Faculty Fellows program. When this initiative was created within the Housing and Dining Department, as cited in Dungy (2005), participants should be able to determine what role all sectors of the academy have in contributing to achieving outcomes and to assess and evaluate all aspects of the program (p. 10).

Student Affairs administrators must be willing to “engage faculty in the formation as well as the delivery of education provided in settings beyond the classroom instead of just asking for their blessing” (Appleton, 2008, p. 10). A common theme in the present study was developing that buy-in from participants of the Faculty Fellows program. Although the present study has shown that there was miscommunication across stakeholders about what roles faculty members and professional staff should carry out, a complicating issue for professional staff is their confusion about faculty members’ priorities for student learning (Appleton, 2008). Therefore, it is important to incorporate faculty members into the orientation and thought process behind an initiative in order to



see what's important to a faculty member as well as how residence life programs could benefit faculty most.

The demands on educators have changed and have now become more student-centered and more a "scaffolding development with experiences that combine academic and community based work known as learning portfolios" (Huber & Hutchings, 2004, p. 4). While the present study provided insight on perceptions about faculty members, one must realize that "tenure and advancement policies that privilege research productivity limits faculty members commitment to working with students outside of the classroom" (Baker and Griffin, 2010, p. 3). Since most of the focus for receiving tenure is placed on research productivity, extra commitments to students are placed on the side. Although one area of the tenure decision is to be based on service, few institutions provide genuine incentives for faculty members for quality service activities that include cooperating or collaborating with student affairs. "To be taken seriously, collaboration with student affairs must be a high priority and that may require leadership to revisit criteria for faculty tenure" (Grund, 2004).

Expectations for faculty tenure requirements include incentives for participating in a student affairs program such as the Faculty Fellows residence life program. Faculty members are educators at all times, not just in the classroom. The movement toward "engaged learning" promotes encouraging faculty and staff members to interact with students outside of the classroom. Graff, (cited in Huber & Hutchings, 2004) argued that making "potential conversations between scholars, courses, and disciplines into real conversations should be a keystone of educational reform" (p. 5). Similar to the many educational roles played by Student Affairs professionals, faculty members must balance

different roles within the academy as well. Many faculty members are parents outside of the job, advisors at the job, faculty, and often mentors. Baker and Griffin (2010) described the roles of faculty members as, “engaging in knowledge development, information sharing, and support as students set and achieve goals” (p. 5). In turn, residence life student affairs practitioners should also follow up with being knowledge developers within their residence halls and living learning programs implemented throughout the department.

An interesting connection made between the present study and professional literature was the idea of student affairs practitioners embracing the concept of student learning, but uncritically keeping the same approaches and programming to their work (Harper and Antonio, 2008). Participants in this study talked about a lack of progress and investment with the program. Many also talked about their feelings of failure. A program like the Faculty Fellows program has to be done with intentionality, “which requires courage, consciousness, assessment, and planning” (p. 11). The Residence Life department has joined with a few courageous educators (Faculty Fellows) who are willing to bring the ideals of engaged learning into residence life. Now, the department must make a more deliberate effort toward process evaluation (Schein, 1999) and program planning.

A conscious formative program assessment includes being open to constructive feedback on a yearly basis. “Feedback can be thought of as information that informs us of our progress toward some goal that we are trying to achieve (Schein, 1999, p. 130)”. Creating opportunities for feedback means that relevant stakeholders share their thoughts or opinions about a program to facilitate its success. Owens and Valesky (2007) stated

that a leader, in situations similar to the Faculty Fellows program, “should work as a chairperson, share the problem with the group, and facilitate efforts to reach consensus on a group decision, without selling or manipulating a decision with the group” (p. 305). Accepting their premise, all members have equal opportunity to be heard, express their feelings, and be part of the continuing development of the Faculty Fellows program.

The objective of the present study was to create a formative evaluation of the current Faculty Fellows program at Eastern Illinois University. With this in mind, some suggestions for future research as well as recommendations for educators and student affairs practitioners are listed below.

#### *Recommendations for Future Research*

1. Future program development research should include a quantitative sample of on campus students at various stages of their collegiate career to identify student learning outcomes generated from the Faculty Fellows program.
2. Future qualitative research should examine a more diverse group of faculty and student program participants to generate greater interest across faculty specialties and student interests.

#### *Recommendations for Educators and Student Affairs Practitioners*

1. Develop learning objectives for the Faculty Fellows program for distribution to all participants.

2. Provide orientation for Faculty Fellows prior to the beginning of the school year so that all involved understand their roles, get contact information and know what is expected before residents arrive on campus for Move-In.
3. Keep Move-In day optional for Faculty Fellows to interact with students.
4. Continue to find ways of decreasing the “awkwardness or intrusive” feelings among faculty members and/or students about faculty members entering the halls and engaging with students.
5. Complete a formative program evaluation yearly so that stakeholders are aware of what improvements are needed. An annual formative evaluation will also help hold professional staff members more accountable.
6. Encourage all stakeholders to have a voice in Faculty Fellows program development to create the commitment needed from staff, students, and faculty members for a successful outcome.
7. Establish the benefits of the program for faculty members (incentives and rewards) to generate greater interest in participation.

### **Summary**

The present researcher sought to create a formative evaluation of the effectiveness of the current Faculty Fellows program at Eastern Illinois University, ultimately working to improve the future of the program. Insights and perspectives were gathered from both focus groups and individual interviews with program stakeholders. Although the researcher was not able to create a layout as to what the program should look like, the researcher provided feedback and recommendation to further improve the Faculty Fellows program for the future. As Rasmussen and Skinner (In Shapiro and Levine) stated,

The best design will depend on institutional environment and the specific disciplines to be integrated as well as the characteristics of the faculty and students who will participate. The goal is to provide a richer range of learning experiences to our students and contribute to a more vibrant and supportive campus environment for students and faculty alike(23).

Implementing a program like the Faculty Fellows program takes work and though it may come more easily some “it is about making connections within a major, between fields, between curriculum and co-curriculum, or between academic knowledge and practice” (Huber & Hutchings, 2004, p. 3). The Faculty Fellows is essential to bridging the gap between Academic and Student Affairs and helping students connect personal and professional growth and civility throughout their time within an institution.

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## **Tables and Figures**

**Table 1**

Resident Assistants

PARTICIPANT	SEX	YEAR IN POSITION
1	M	3
2	M	3
3	M	1
4	F	1
5	F	1
6	M	1
7	M	2
8	F	2
9	M	2
10	F	2
11	F	2
12	F	2
13	F	2

**Table 2**

Faculty

PARTICIPANT	SEX	YEAR IN PROGRAM	FACULTY RANK	ROLE IN PROGRAM
1	F	2	Professor	Member
2	F	2	Assistant Professor	Member
3	M	2	Assistant Professor	Member
4	F	2	Assistant Professor	Team Captain
5	F	2	Assistant Professor	Team Captain

**Table 3**

Professional Staff

PARTICIPANT	SEX	YEARS INVOLVED IN PROGRAM
1	F	2
2	F	2
3	F	4
4	M	2
5	F	4
6	F	4

**Table 4**

Undergraduate Students

PARTICIPANT	SEX	CLASS RANKING
1	M	Senior
2	M	Senior
3	F	Sophomore
4	F	Sophomore
5	F	Sophomore

## Appendix A

December 7, 2009

RE: Faculty Fellows: Academic Initiatives within Residential Learning Communities at Eastern Illinois University

Dear Participant,

I am a second year graduate student in the College Student Affairs master's degree program at Eastern Illinois University. Currently, I am in the process of collecting data for my thesis titled "Faculty Fellows: Academic Initiatives within Residential Learning Communities at Eastern Illinois University". My goal is to create a formative evaluation of the current Housing and Dining Service's Faculty Fellows program at Eastern Illinois University. The immediate goal of the present study is to understand the experiences of current Faculty Fellow program participants from multiple perspectives. The ultimate goal is to improve the future program delivery fidelity to support the EIU President's goal of making the university the best in the country in terms of integrated learning.

You were identified as a potential participant for the study because you are a person who either lives on campus, staff member of the Housing department or works collaboratively with the department. Your participation in the study is completely voluntary. If you agree to participate your involvement in the study will include an interview or focus group about your experience with the Faculty Fellows program. The interview and/or focus group will last approximately one (1) hour and will be completely confidential. This process will take place in person and on-campus.

Your participation is critical to the success of the study. Sharing your experience with this Faculty Fellows program would help further the development for future semesters and help obtain the goal set by EIU's President of becoming the best at integrated learning. Also, your perceptions may help identify unknown limitations that can be addressed by college professionals.



If you choose to participate in the study, email me at [dlwilson3@eiu.edu](mailto:dlwilson3@eiu.edu) to confirm your consent to participate. When your email is received, a letter of informed consent will be emailed to you. When those documents are received, a time will be established to conduct an interview with you.

If you have any questions about the study and your participation, you can contact me by phone at 708-323-0032 or by email at [dlwilson3@eiu.edu](mailto:dlwilson3@eiu.edu).

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Denika L. Wilson

Candidate for Masters of Science, College Student Affairs

Eastern Illinois University

## **Appendix B**

## **CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

Faculty Fellows: Academic Initiatives within the Residential

Learning Communities at Eastern Illinois University

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Denika L. Wilson and Dr. Charles G. Eberly from the Department of Counseling and Student Development at Eastern Illinois University. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Please ask questions about anything you do not understand before deciding whether or not to participate.

You were identified as a potential participant for the study because you are a person who either lives on campus, staff member of the Housing department or works collaboratively with the Housing and Dining's Faculty Fellows program.

### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of the present qualitative study is to create a formative evaluation of the current Housing and Dining Service's Faculty Fellows program at Eastern Illinois University.

### **PROCEDURES**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to:

- (1) Answer several open-ended questions about your experience with the Faculty Fellows program, pre-determined factors that may contribute to the interaction between students and faculty members and the overall effectiveness of the program.
- (2) Agree to the recording of the interview using a digital video recorder.
- (3) Complete a confidential interview, lasting approximately one (1) hour with me on-campus.

### **POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORT**

There are no foreseeable risks associated with this study. Participants who later feel discomfort for any reason may have their data/comments removed from the study materials.

### **POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

The individuals participating in this study will not directly benefit from participating in this study. However, the results of this study will provide many benefits to the specific Faculty Fellows program here at EIU as well as worldwide. Since there is very little quantitative and qualitative research about the perceptions and effectiveness of this program, this research will be valuable to Universities and colleges who are looking to provide on-campus, university owned housing. The results of the study can also be used to provide additional resources to improve the living learning environments for on campus residents.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any information obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by the principle researcher who will have complete ownership of all information shared by the participants. Only pertinent findings of the research will be shared with the thesis committee members.

The researcher will be the only person who will have access to the video files of the interview. All interviews will be transcribed and the original tapes will be destroyed after the approval of the master's thesis by the committee members.

### **PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

Participation in this research study is voluntary and not a requirement or a condition for being the recipient of benefits or services from Eastern Illinois University or any other organization sponsoring this research project. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits of services to which you are otherwise entitled. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer. There is no penalty if you withdraw from the study and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

#### **IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS**

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact:

Denika Wilson

(217) 581-5431

[dlwilson3@eiu.edu](mailto:dlwilson3@eiu.edu)

Charles Eberly, Ph.D.

(217) 581-7235

[cgeberly@eiu.edu](mailto:cgeberly@eiu.edu)

#### **RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS**

If you have any questions or concern about the treatment of human participants in this study, you may call or write:

Institutional Review Board

Eastern Illinois University

600 Lincoln Ave Charleston, IL 61920

Telephone: (217) 581-8576

E-mail: [eiuirb@eiu.edu](mailto:eiuirb@eiu.edu)

You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject with a member of the IRB. The IRB is an independent committee composed of

members of the University community, as well as lay members of the community not connected with EIU. The IRB has reviewed and approved this study.

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I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time. I have been given a copy of this form.

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Printed Name of Participant

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Signature of Participant

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Date

## Appendix C

## **Focus Group Protocol (Appendix C)-RA**

Developed by Denika L Wilson

October 2009

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[Ask permission to record and begin recording]

### **Introductions**

“Hello. My name is Denika Wilson, and I am a graduate student here at Eastern Illinois University in the College Student Affairs program.”

### **Purpose and Goals of the Study**

“I am currently completing a study on the Housing and Dining’s Faculty Fellows program, seeking to create a formative evaluation of the current Faculty Fellows program at Eastern Illinois University. The ultimate goal is to improve the future of the program. This conversation will help me as I explore this topic.”

### **Consent Form [re-affirm permission to record]**

“This conversation will last approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour and will be recorded so that I am able to transcribe it at a later date. If you are still interested in participating in this study, please take a moment to read through this consent form. Signing this form indicates your agreement to take part in this project and your permission to record this conversation. If at any time you wish to stop this conversation, please let me know and I will promptly turn off the recording device. If following this conversation you do not wish for your contributions to be used in the research, please indicate so, and they will not be used.”

### **Interview**

Research Questions:

1. What is a Faculty Fellow?
2. What is the purpose of the Faculty Fellows program?
3. What barriers do you believe exist that prevents students from interacting with faculty within the residence halls?



4. What barriers do you believe exist that prevents staff members from interacting with faculty within the residence halls?
5. What are your perceptions about the Faculty Fellows program?
6. How does the Faculty Fellows program meet the objectives set for this program by the department? (What are the learning objectives/outcomes of the program)
7. What successes have you had as a member of this program?
8. How can this program be improved in future semesters?

### **Wrap-up**

“Thank you so much for participating in this study. Your time is of great value to me, and I appreciate you sharing it with me. This conversation will be transcribed and analyzed for content as part of my research. Is it okay if I use this conversation in my research? [If yes] would you like a copy of this conversation for your records? [Pause] Would you be interested in being contacted at a later date if I have any further questions? [Pause; Give business card] Here is my contact information. Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. Again, thank you for talking with me today.”

## **Appendix D**

## **Focus Group Protocol(Appendix D)-Faculty**

Developed by Denika L Wilson

October 2009

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[Ask permission to record and begin recording]

### **Introductions**

“Hello. My name is Denika Wilson, and I am a graduate student here at Eastern Illinois University in the College Student Affairs program.”

### **Purpose and Goals of the Study**

“I am currently completing a study on the Housing and Dining’s Faculty Fellows program, seeking to create a formative evaluation of the current Faculty Fellows program at Eastern Illinois University. The ultimate goal is to improve the future of the program. This conversation will help me as I explore this topic.”

### **Consent Form [re-affirm permission to record]**

“This conversation will last approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour and will be recorded so that I am able to transcribe it at a later date. If you are still interested in participating in this study, please take a moment to read through this consent form. Signing this form indicates your agreement to take part in this project and your permission to record this conversation. If at any time you wish to stop this conversation, please let me know and I will promptly turn off the recording device. If following this conversation you do not wish for your contributions to be used in the research, please indicate so, and they will not be used.”

### **Interview**

Research Questions:

1. What is a Faculty Fellow?
2. What is the purpose of the Faculty Fellows program?

3. How were you recruited or introduced to the Faculty Fellows program?
4. How comfortable are residents with faculty members entering the residence halls to create the integrative experience?
5. How comfortable are your staff members engaging faculty members into the residence halls?
6. What pre-conceived notions about faculty interaction with students outside the classroom exist that may impede the overall effectiveness of the program?
7. What are the benefits of this program?
  - a. Students?
  - b. Faculty?
8. How can this program be improved in future semesters?

### **Wrap-up**

“Thank you so much for participating in this study. Your time is of great value to me, and I appreciate you sharing it with me. This conversation will be transcribed and analyzed for content as part of my research. Is it okay if I use this conversation in my research? [If yes] would you like a copy of this conversation for your records? [Pause] Would you be interested in being contacted at a later date if I have any further questions? [Pause; Give business card] Here is my contact information. Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. Again, thank you for talking with me today.”

## **Appendix E**

## **Focus Group Protocol(Appendix E)-Student**

Developed by Denika L Wilson

October 2009

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[Ask permission to record and begin recording]

### **Introductions**

“Hello. My name is Denika Wilson, and I am a graduate student here at Eastern Illinois University in the College Student Affairs program.”

### **Purpose and Goals of the Study**

“I am currently completing a study on the Housing and Dining’s Faculty Fellows program, seeking to create a formative evaluation of the current Faculty Fellows program at Eastern Illinois University. The ultimate goal is to improve the future of the program. This conversation will help me as I explore this topic.”

### **Consent Form [re-affirm permission to record]**

“This conversation will last approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour and will be recorded so that I am able to transcribe it at a later date. If you are still interested in participating in this study, please take a moment to read through this consent form. Signing this form indicates your agreement to take part in this project and your permission to record this conversation. If at any time you wish to stop this conversation, please let me know and I will promptly turn off the recording device. If following this conversation you do not wish for your contributions to be used in the research, please indicate so, and they will not be used.”

### **Interview**

Research Questions:

1. Do you have contact with faculty members outside of the classroom?
2. Can you tell me about the types of interactions that you have?
  - a. What is a faculty fellow? Charleston Chew?
  - b. What is the purpose of the Faculty Fellows program?

3. For those of you who do not have contact with faculty outside of the classroom, why do you think that is?
4. What are your perceptions of your interactions with faculty outside the classroom?
5. What is the role of faculty on a college campus?
6. Who initiates interactions outside the classroom? And, why?
7. Do students have an interest in building relationships with faculty?
8. How comfortable are residents with faculty members entering the residence halls to create the integrative experience?
9. Do students benefit from this engagement outside the classroom or program?
10. How can this program be improved in future semesters?

### **Wrap-up**

“Thank you so much for participating in this study. Your time is of great value to me, and I appreciate you sharing it with me. This conversation will be transcribed and analyzed for content as part of my research. Is it okay if I use this conversation in my research? [If yes] would you like a copy of this conversation for your records? [Pause] Would you be interested in being contacted at a later date if I have any further questions? [Pause; Give business card] Here is my contact information. Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. Again, thank you for talking with me today.”

## **Appendix F**



## **Focus Group Protocol(Appendix F)-Professional Staff**

Developed by Denika L Wilson

October 2009

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[Ask permission to record and begin recording]

### **Introductions**

“Hello. My name is Denika Wilson, and I am a graduate student here at Eastern Illinois University in the College Student Affairs program.”

### **Purpose and Goals of the Study**

“I am currently completing a study on the Housing and Dining’s Faculty Fellows program, seeking to create a formative evaluation of the current Faculty Fellows program at Eastern Illinois University. The ultimate goal is to improve the future of the program. This conversation will help me as I explore this topic.”

### **Consent Form [re-affirm permission to record]**

“This conversation will last approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour and will be recorded so that I am able to transcribe it at a later date. If you are still interested in participating in this study, please take a moment to read through this consent form. Signing this form indicates your agreement to take part in this project and your permission to record this conversation. If at any time you wish to stop this conversation, please let me know and I will promptly turn off the recording device. If following this conversation you do not wish for your contributions to be used in the research, please indicate so, and they will not be used.”

### **Interview**

Research Questions:

1. What is a Faculty Fellow?
2. What is the purpose of the Faculty Fellows program?
3. What barriers do you believe exist that prevent students from interacting with faculty within the residence halls?

4. What barriers exist that prevent staff members from interacting with faculty?
5. What barriers do you believe exist that prevent the professional staff members and faculty members collaboratively working to create the integrative experience?
6. What are some preconceived notions about faculty concerning the Faculty Fellows program?
7. What are some preconceived notions about students
8. What are your perceptions about the Faculty Fellows program?
9. How does the Faculty Fellows program meet the learning objectives of the department?
10. What are the successes you've had as a member of this program?
11. How can this program be improved in future semesters?

### **Wrap-up**

"Thank you so much for participating in this study. Your time is of great value to me, and I appreciate you sharing it with me. This conversation will be transcribed and analyzed for content as part of my research. Is it okay if I use this conversation in my research? [If yes] would you like a copy of this conversation for your records? [Pause] Would you be interested in being contacted at a later date if I have any further questions? [Pause; Give business card] Here is my contact information. Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. Again, thank you for talking with me today."