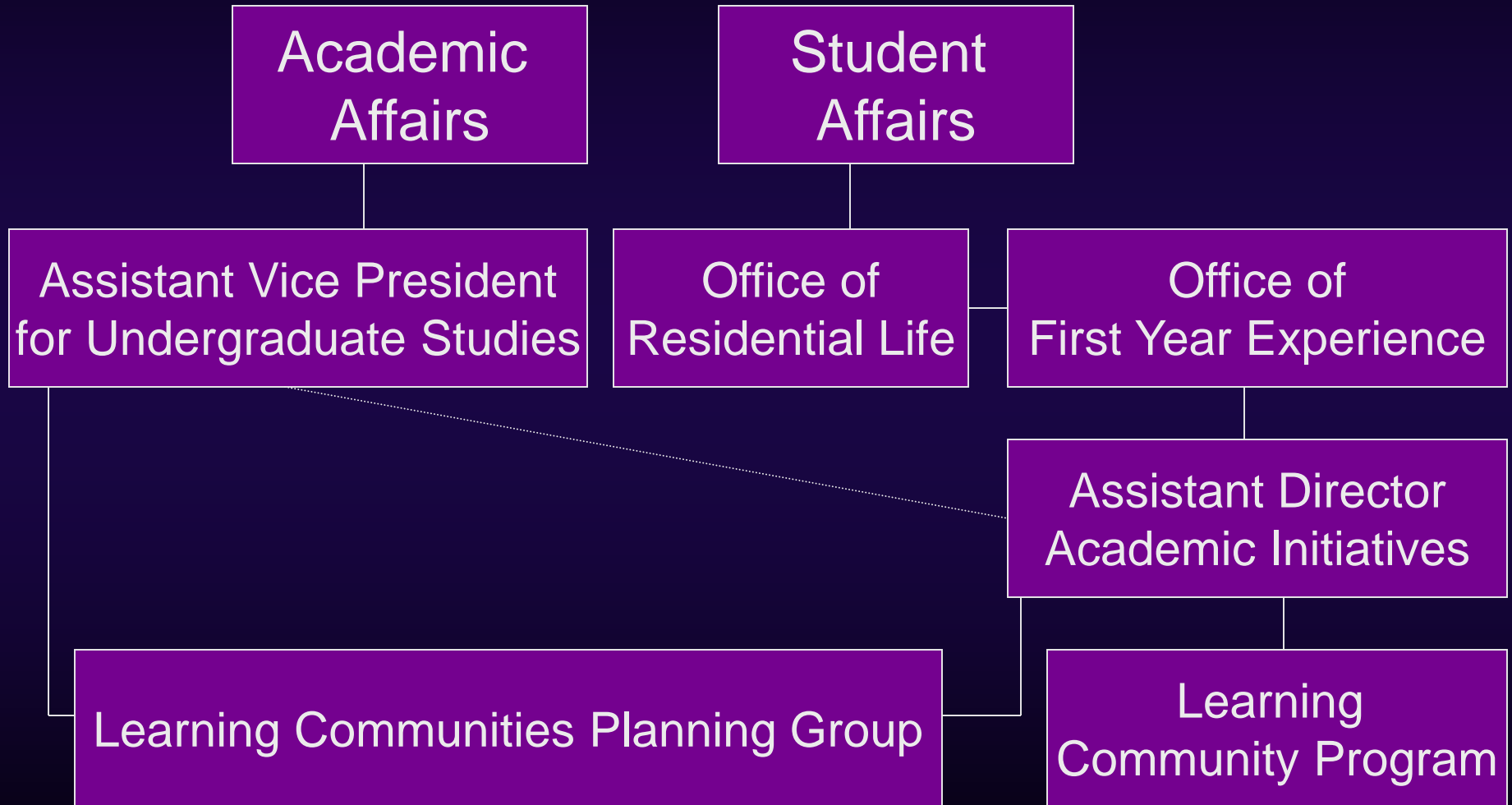# Planning for Learning Communities

Learning Community Planning Group Members – Fall 1998

- Academic Deans
- Director, First Year Experience
- Director, Residential Life
- Student Relations Coordinator
- First Year Seminar Faculty
- Undergraduate Student
- Associate Director, Residential Life
- Assistant Director, First Year Culture
- Housing Complex Director

Learning Communities Program Outcomes

- Higher Levels of Student Retention
- Increased Faculty-Student Interaction
- Stronger Student Academic Achievement
- Greater Student-to-Student Interaction and Social Support Networks
- Established Academic Support Networks
- Eased Transition to College
- Higher Levels of Satisfaction with College Experience

Learning Communities Model

Course Co-Enrollment
- Three Courses
  - Theme Course
  - English/Speech/Misc.
  - First Year Seminar/Misc.
- General Education Courses

Clustered Housing
- Community Members Live on Same Floor

Peer Mentorship
- Learning Community Coordinator

Peer Mentorship

Learning Community Coordinator (LCC)
- Community Development
- Individual Resident Interactions
- Faculty Connection
- Activities
  - Welcome Events
  - Course Connection & Study Groups
  - Study Incentive Programs
  - Bookmark/Bulletin Board
  - Theme Related/Team Building Activities

Program Assessment

- Learning Community Assessment Consultant – Dr. Anne Blackhurst, Counseling and Student Personnel, MSU.

- Tools selected for ability to measure desired outcomes and breadth of scope.

Assessment Model-Tools

- Entering Characteristics
  - ACT, HS GPA, HS Rank

- College Student Expectations Questionnaire (CSXQ)/ Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP)
  - Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research and Planning/ Higher Education Research Institute

Assessment Model-Tools

- College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ)
    - Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research and Planning

- Student Developmental Task and Lifestyle Inventory (SDTLI)
    - Student Development Associates, Inc.

- Institutional Data
    - GPA and Retention

- Qualitative Data – Focus Groups

Assessment Model-Stage II

Utilized Comparison Groups
- •Learning Community Students
- •First Year Seminar Students
- •Control Group Students

Entering Characteristics	CIRP/CSXQ

Pre-Post Test Relationship

CSEQ	Institutional Data	Qualitative Data Focus Groups
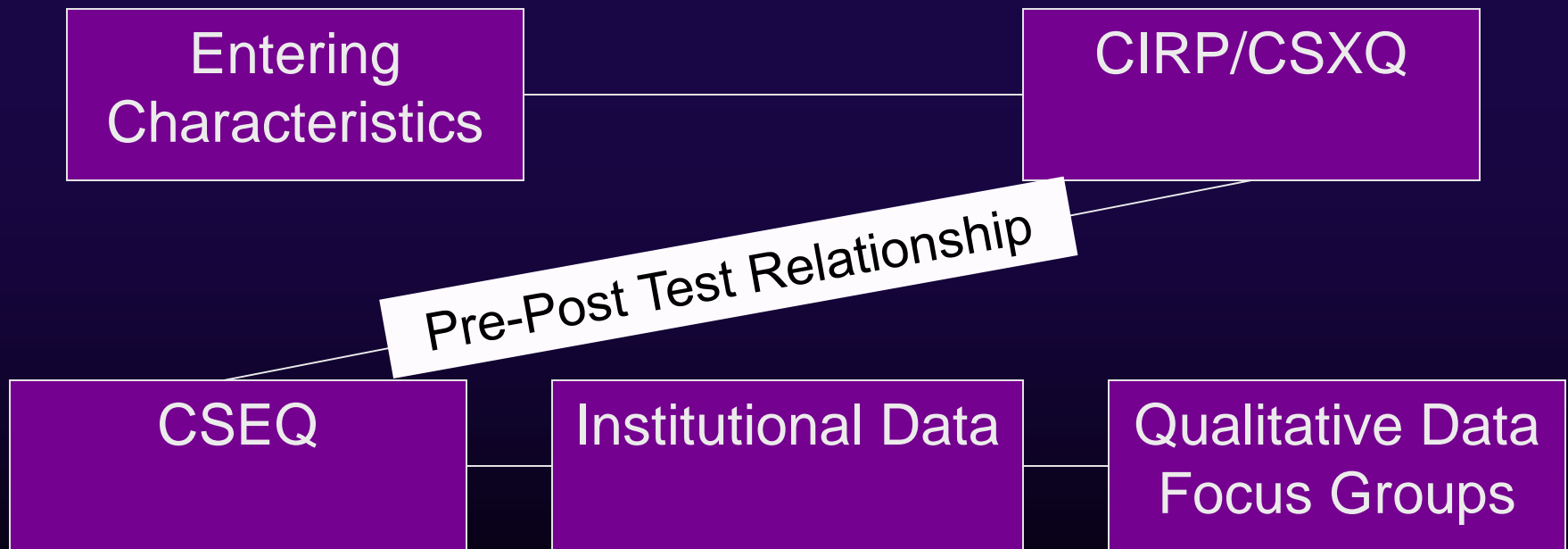
Assessment Findings

Entering Characteristics
- (ACT, HS Rank, HS GPA) show no significant differences.

College Student Expectations Questionnaire
- Results show no significant differences in expectations of the college experience.

College Student Experiences Questionnaire

- Learning Community students were significantly different in areas of:
  - Course Learning
  - Writing Experiences
  - Experiences with Faculty
  - Campus Facilities
  - Clubs and Organizations
  - Personal Experiences
  - Student Acquaintances
  - Opinions About the University

Focus Groups

The Learning Community:

- Eases the Transition to College
- Facilitates Social Integration
- Helps Students Develop Personal Relationships with Faculty
- Facilitates In-Class Learning
- Creates a Living/Learning Environment
- Works Against Peer Norms
- Participation Cannot be Attributed Solely to Self-Fulfilling Expectations

Faculty Interaction

Learning community students and first year seminar students:

- talked with an instructor about information related to the course they were taking
- discussed career plans and ambitions
- talked with a faculty member, counselor, or other staff member about personal concerns

significantly more often than students in the control group.

Faculty Relationships

"It was really neat to see [our professor] out of the classroom and actually, like, talk to us and interact with us as people instead of as students. And so I thought that did make an impact because it gave [faculty] a humane side as teachers, not like a scary monster."

Academic Support Network

"[The Learning Community] made it easier to go to class. You had someone to walk with; you could at least walk into the room and see people you know. It was comforting to see familiar faces."

"If I feel I have an answer [in class], I can share and have the support of the people around me, and you know that everyone won't be laughing at you. You don't feel so bad answering questions wrong when there are people around that you know."

Facilitates In-Class Learning

"Professors know us better. They know who we are and that helps make you feel more in control to go ask questions and stuff."

"I felt like the professor was actually talking to me [during class lectures] rather than just talking over our heads."

"[The faculty] made it seem like we were both working towards me getting an education instead of me working and them judging."

Academic Achievement
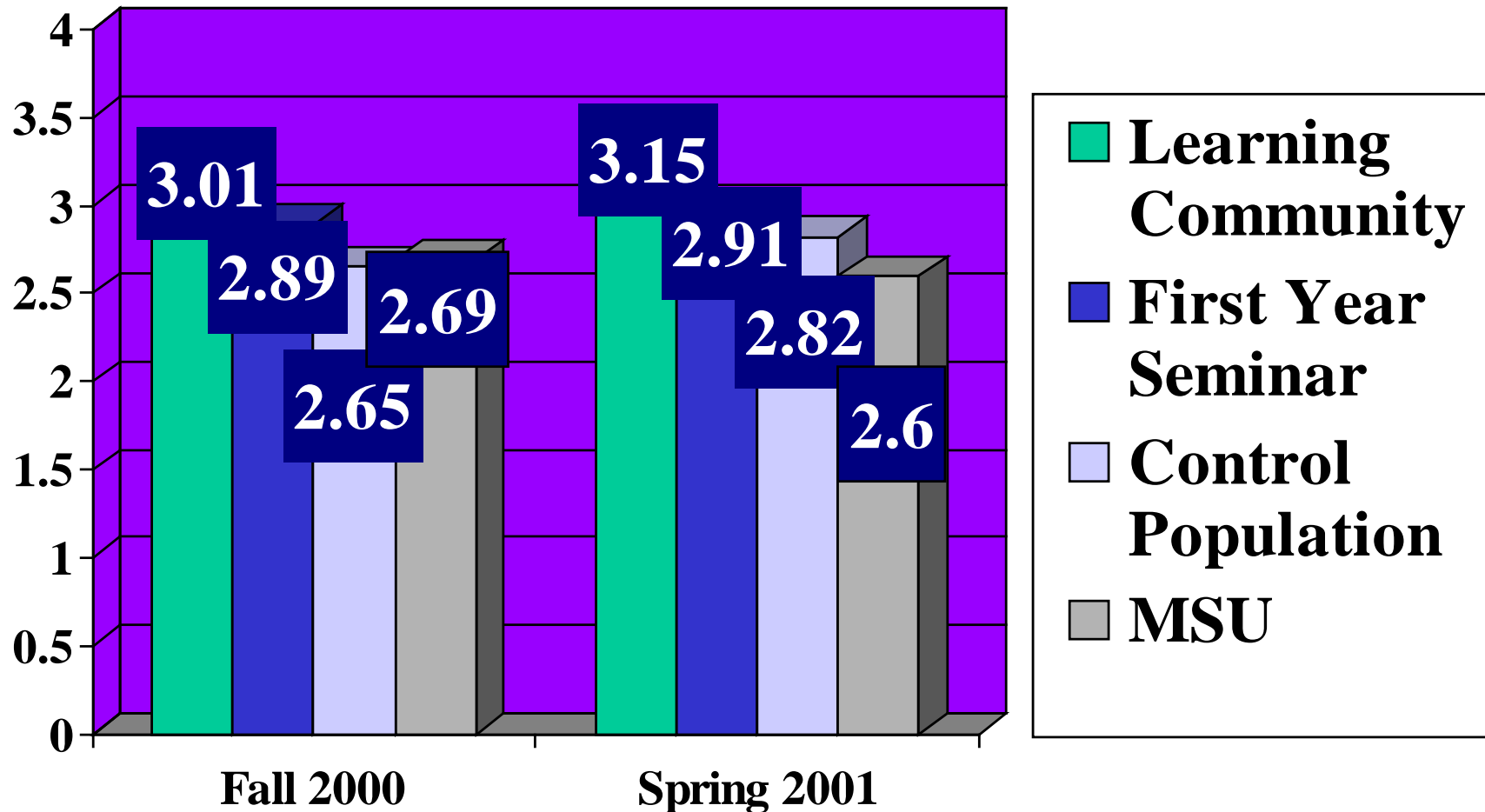
Study Participants: Learning Communities (n=71),
First Year Seminar (n=126), Control Group (n=45)

Student-to-Student Interaction and Social Support

Learning community students and first year seminar students:

- met other students at campus locations for a discussion
- asked other people to read something they wrote to see if it was clear to them

significantly more often than students in the control group.

Student-to-Student Interaction and Social Support

Learning community students :

- participated in student clubs and organizations

- became acquainted with students whose interests were different than their own

significantly more often than first year students or students in the control group.

Social Integration

"The Learning Community…makes it easier getting to know people; you got to know them faster when you see them every day and you live close to them, eat with them, take classes with them…
We all have a common ground."

Development of Community

"We all kind of came together, to work together, to help each other out, help each other study, work through problems. We all became really good friends, and stick together through everything.…If something goes wrong with one person, everybody really pulls together to help. All of us are like…a neighborhood."

Eases the Transition to College

"I wanted to start off the right way. You hear all of the stereotypes of freshmen dropping out of school after their first year…half of them don't even make a 2.0 their first semester 'cause they don't have any structure. And not all of that is true, but some students that I know have dropped out or are on probation, and here I am. And I think part of the reason I am doing so much better is because I had some sore of structure and direction when I got here."

Satisfaction with the College Experience

Learning community students and first year seminar students were significantly different than the control group when asked to rate how they "liked college."

If learning community students and first year seminar students were to start their education all over again, they would select MSU significantly more often than students in the control group.

Retention
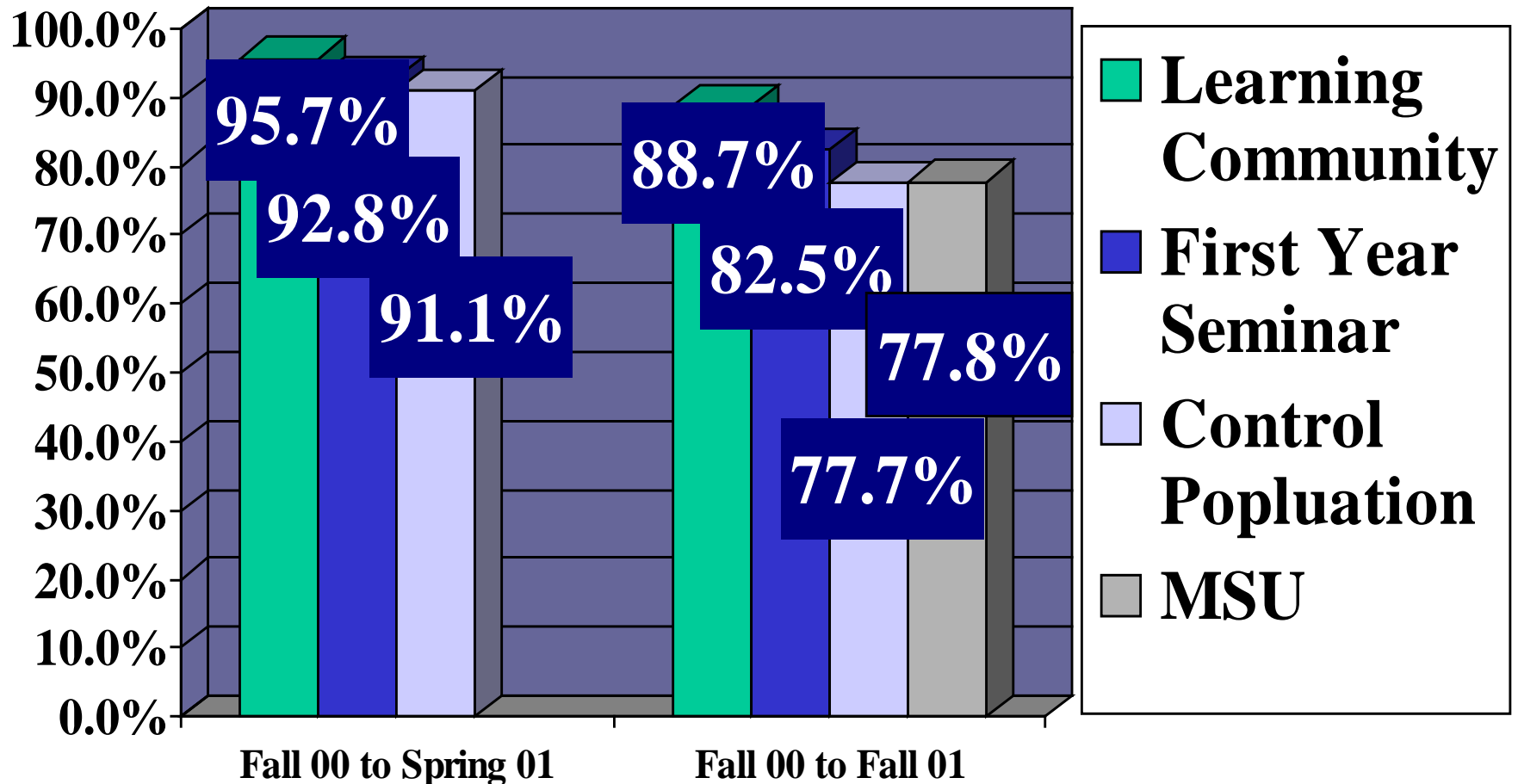
Study Participants: Learning Communities (n=71), First Year Seminar (n=126), Control Group (n=45)

Further Analysis

- Learning community students' experiences with faculty were significantly related to student grade point average, student satisfaction with the university, and student retention.