

What the Heck are Meta Majors Anyway?

OK, let's keep it simple. Meta Majors are like those cool, all-in-one combos at your favorite restaurant. They're like little families of related college majors hanging out together under one big umbrella. Picture this: if you're torn between Nursing or Sports and Exercise Science, they are snuggled up together in the Nursing and Health Sciences Meta Major. Cool, right?

In other words, Meta Majors allow students from the same college to share common living space within our residence halls. Meta Majors are designed to help students establish social and academic networks to enhance learning experiences and develop academic and career plans. www.wtamu.edu › [student-life](#) › [residential-living](#)

Why WT Believes in Meta Major Housing

Students thrive in the university setting when they experience a strong sense of belonging, and we expect that Meta Major housing will help Buffs find their own herds early in their educational journey. We are creating an environment in which students can connect with others academically and socially. By intentionally creating clusters of rooms for specific majors based on their college of study, students will be able to more easily connect with each other and receive direct programming and support from our staff. www.wtamu.edu › [student-life](#) › [residential-living](#)

So, here's the research behind Meta Majors:

Social science research provides evidence that students who live in residence halls (RHs) learn more and are more likely to remain in college and to graduate than students who have never lived in an RH (Blimling, 1993; Gellin, 2003; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005; Pelter, Laden, & Matranga, 1999; Schudde, 2011; Terenzini, Pascarella, & Blimling, 1996). However, most of this research also shows that the effects of RHs are indirect — meaning that learning occurs as a result of student interaction and the greater access RH students have to faculty, student clubs, and campus facilities (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005). Unlike academic courses, RHs are not usually organized to teach content-based knowledge. Instead, the intermediate peer environment of RHs is structured to create conditions that engage students in active learning. It is through [intentional] student interactions in this environment that students learn. Although some special assignment programs in RHs are designed to produce specific student learning outcomes... traditional RHs create conditions that facilitate student learning. (Blimling, Gregory S.. *Student Learning in College Residence Halls : What Works, What Doesn't, and Why*, John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2015. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/wtamu-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1866581>. Created from wtamu-ebooks on 2024-05-22 13:58:07).

In 2002, Zeller, James, and Klippenstein identified five general types of residential-based educational programs used to varying degrees throughout the United States: (1) residential

colleges; (2) LLPs; (3) theme housing; (4) residential learning communities; and (5) freshman-year experiences. These five types of programs focused on integrating the academic interests of students into the residential experience to enhance student learning. (Blimling, Gregory S.. *Student Learning in College Residence Halls : What Works, What Doesn't, and Why*, John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2015. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/wtamu-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1866581>).

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WT Meta Major Housing is built around two of these models: Living-Learning Programs (Centers) and Residential Learning Communities.

Pascarella and Terenzini (1991, 2005) also found that the impact of college RHs was stronger in LLCs than in conventional RHs because of the greater focus placed on academic issues and the opportunities to interact with peers and faculty on educationally meaningful topics. Most of the research reviewed by Pascarella and Terenzini shows that the influence of college RHs is indirect rather than direct. The indirect effect comes from living on campus, which increases the likelihood of student involvement in cocurricular activities, interaction with peers and faculty, and supporting a positive perception of the campus social climate and the overall college experience. (Blimling, Gregory S.. *Student Learning in College Residence Halls : What Works, What Doesn't, and Why*, John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2015. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/wtamu-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1866581>).

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One of the most often cited benefits of living in an RH is the influence it has on student retention and graduation (Tinto, 1993). In 1977, Astin found that living in an RH compared with living with parents or in a private room “adds about 12% to the student’s chances of finishing college”

(p. 109). (Blimling, Gregory S.. *Student Learning in College Residence Halls : What Works, What Doesn't, and Why*, John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2015. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/wtamu-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1866581>).

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Living and Learning Centers (LLCs) are academic communities that include (1) significant faculty involvement, (2) at least one course (credit or non-credit) taken in common by students in the LLC, (3) some form of selection or application process, and (4) a clearly defined mission.

(Blimling, Gregory S.. *Student Learning in College Residence Halls : What Works, What Doesn't, and Why*, John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2015. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/wtamu-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1866581>).

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WT’s Meta Major Housing is focused on adding significant faculty involvement to the residential experience, with the missional belief that “*Meta Majors will help students establish social and academic networks to enhance learning experiences and develop academic and career plans.*” www.wtamu.edu › [student-life](#) › [residential-living](#)

The idea behind LLCs is that having students live together in a community of scholarship, enriched by high levels of faculty participation, academic engagement, and cultural programs, produces greater student learning. Furthermore, it brings about closer integration of what students learn from formal instruction with where they learn it and how it is shared with peers in the living unit. Instead of separating these environments, LLCs merge them to focus the residential experience on intellectual issues. (Blimling, Gregory S.. *Student Learning in College Residence Halls : What*

Works, What Doesn't, and Why, John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2015. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/wtamu-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1866581>. Created from wtamu-ebooks on 2024-05-22 14:11:05).

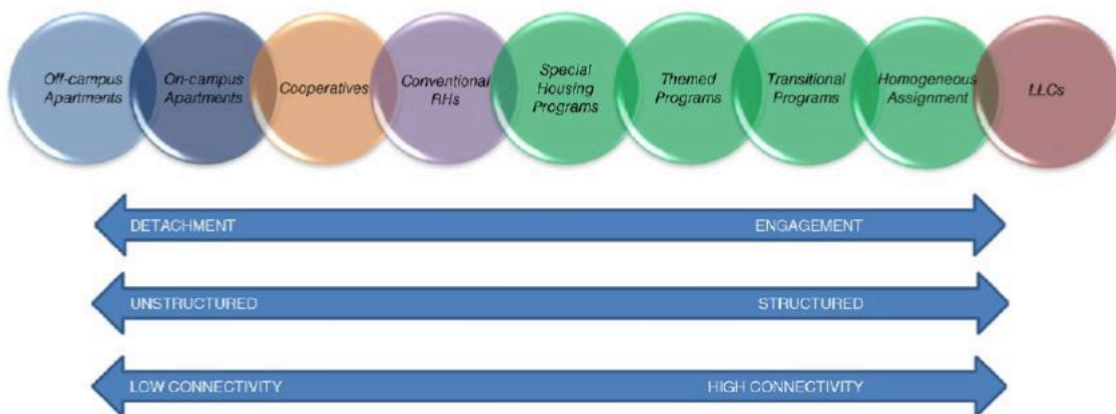
Most studies comparing the social climates of LLCs and conventional RHs show LLCs to have more positive social climates (Henry & Schein, 1998; Inkelas & Weisman, 2003; Pike, 1999; Schein, 2005; Taylor et al., 2003; Wawrzynski et al., 2009) and students exhibit stronger feelings of institutional belonging (Schussler & Fierros, 2008). LLC students also report better personal adjustment, a greater sense of well-being, stronger intellectual growth, and more enriched academic experiences (Pasque & Murphy, 2005; Rohli & Rogge, 2012; Taylor et al., 2003). (Blimling, Gregory S.. *Student Learning in College Residence Halls : What Works, What Doesn't, and Why*, John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2015. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/wtamu-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1866581>. Created from wtamu-ebooks on 2024-05-22 14:12:14).

Assignment by Academic Discipline

This approach has been popular in preprofessional programs such as engineering for several decades. Frazier and Eighmy (2012) studied pharmacy, engineering, and architecture students assigned to living units based on their academic majors. Students on both the pharmacy floor and engineering/architecture floor reported better residential learning experiences than students with the same majors assigned randomly in the same buildings. Students in the homogeneously assigned units reported that faculty interaction improved their satisfaction and the quality of the learning experience. They also observed that having an RA enrolled in the same academic discipline benefited them more than if the RA was not in the same discipline. (Blimling, Gregory S.. *Student Learning in College Residence Halls : What Works, What Doesn't, and Why*, John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2015. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/wtamu-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1866581>. Created from wtamu-ebooks on 2024-05-22 14:13:46).

Below is a Housing Program Intensity Scale based on Residential Housing Model research. Research indicates that students living in LLC's (WT's Meta Major Housing Model) have higher levels of engagement, enjoy a more structured living and learning environment, and have higher levels of connectivity to the university.

Housing Program Intensity Scale



Blimling, Gregory S.. *Student Learning in College Residence Halls : What Works, What Doesn't, and Why*, John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2015. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/wtamu-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1866581>. Created from wtamu-ebooks on 2024-05-22 14:13:46.

Meta Majors: Why We Believe in Them

This next chart addresses the benefits provided by living in LLC's (WT's Meta Major Housing).

Outcomes	Living at Home	Off-Campus Apartments	On-Campus Apartments Independent Living	Cooperatives	Conventional Residence Halls	Special Assignment Programs	Themed Housing	Transitional Programs	Homogeneous Assignment	Living and Learning Centers
Academic Performance	No	No	No	No	No	Maybe	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Intellectual Development	No	No	No	No	No	Maybe	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Psychosocial Development	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Moral Development	No	No	No	No	No	No	Maybe	No	No	No
Academic Engagement	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Intellectual Atmosphere	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
College Transition	No	No	No	Maybe	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Persistence	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Degree Attainment	No	No	No	Maybe	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Outcomes	Living at Home	Off-Campus Apartments	On-Campus Apartments Independent Living	Cooperatives	Conventional Residence Halls	Special Assignment Programs	Themed Housing	Transitional Programs	Homogeneous Assignment	Living and Learning Centers
Faculty Interaction	No	No	No	No	Yes	Maybe	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Peer Interaction	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cocurricular Involvement	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Campus Involvement	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Satisfaction	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

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[Research is clear that] First-Year Students Should Be Required to Live in Campus Housing. The educational benefits students receive from living in an RH for at least one year are evident from the research.

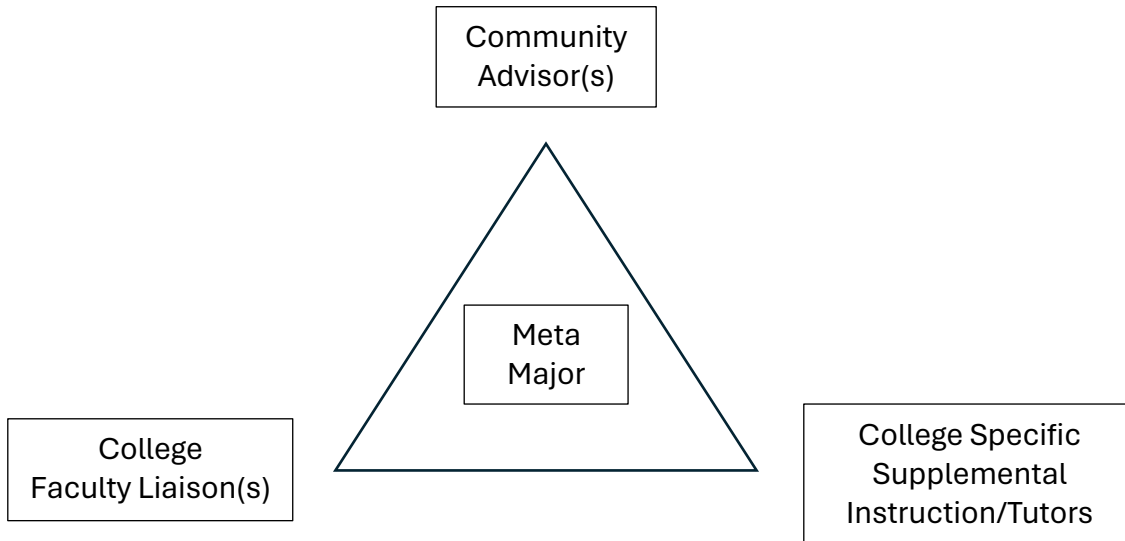
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This year, we are excited to expand our Meta Major programming in our residence halls for students to get academic support through college-specific Supplemental Instruction and

Meta Majors: Why We Believe in Them

Tutoring, as well as creating opportunities for students to interact with faculty from their colleges in less formal situations.

Meta Major Success Triangle:



Partnering with our university partners, students housed in their Meta Major will benefit from having a CA (Community Advisor) related to their Meta Major, as well as Supplemental Instruction and Tutoring available specific to their Meta Major. Our CAs will work with our academic partners (Colleges) and Testing and Tutoring Services to provide opportunities for engagement throughout the year.

We believe that with intentional campus collaboration and facilitating resources we can help students achieve greater levels of success toward their individual goals.

As you can see, we believe in Meta Majors. We are seeing first hand students growing through their Meta Major Housing experience, becoming more engaged and connected to the university, making new friends, and enjoying their WT Experience.

Rest assured; nothing is done in isolation of your student's best interest. WT Residential Living is committed to not just providing a place to live, but to creating a true WT Experience and enjoying being a part of WT Rez Life!

Here's to greater success for our students!

WT Residential Living Staff,

Go Buffs!