Why focus on Integration ?

"While improved retention is a welcome consequence of learning-community work, it has never been its aim. In the push to improve student retention, it is easy to overlook what research tells us: Students persist in their studies if the learning they experience is meaningful, deeply engaging, and relevant to their lives. We know from campus visits — especially sitting in on classes —that if institutional energy goes to designing models and organizational structures without a similar attentiveness to teaching and learning, opportunities are squandered. The camaraderie of co-enrollment may help students stay in school longer, but learning communities can offer more: curricular coherence; integrative, high-quality learning; collaborative knowledge-construction; and skills and knowledge relevant to living in a complex, messy, diverse world. Learning-community work done well thus requires a skillful balancing of two moves: one structural, the other pedagogical and cross-disciplinary. We think [integrated courses are] as foundational to learning-community work as teaching for active, collaborative learning. "

Emily Lardner and Gillies Malnarich, "A New Era in Learning-Community Work: Why the Pedagogy of Intentional Integration Matters" in Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning, July-Aug 2008