

Living Unit Groups (LUGS) Ideas

By Patrick Heise

The idea of Living Unit Groups is that you facilitate meaningful conversations, over several get-togethers, for a small group of residents. LUGs with men and women coming together jointly could be developed, discussing relationships and/or differences between them. Really, any of these LUG ideas could be done just with one gender or with a mix.

(Please, send a description of your successful LUG group to Drake.Martin@uni.edu, to be incorporated here in the future.)

Citizenship Oriented

Book Club (Conversational)

If you know of a good book propose that the group reads the book and then discusses it together. Otherwise brainstorm as a group which book that you would all like to read. Ask participants for \$5-\$10 for you to purchase all of the books for them. It may be several weeks before you get back together – giving people time to read the book. The success of the discussion depends upon you to follow up with those in the group to inquire with them how their reading is going and helping them to remember to read and finish the book. Selecting a book that is not so large will help in people getting through the book easier.

Sports Talk (Conversational)

Sports Fans love to talk about what is going on in the sports world. Discussions could be developed from the group as to what they wanted to discuss or you could use Sports Shows to aid in leading the discussion. Watching Sports Center can inspire some discussion or even better a show on ESPN called “Outside the Lines” with Jim Rome sets up controversial issue discussions between high profile people. This could really spark some interesting discussions with your residents.

Random Acts of Kindness (Activity Based)

Together with this LUG participants could brainstorm acts of kindness that they could do for other residents in their house, other houses in their hall, other houses in other halls, professors or staff on campus, as well as for people that live in the community of Cedar Falls. This could develop into a Community Service LUG as well. The Cedar Valley United Way (235-6211) is a great contact that would work with you to organize an event in which you were able to help out someone in need in the community.

Fantasy Sports (Activity Based)

The world of fantasy sports is huge. You can draft your own franchise of baseball, football, or basketball players and run a league that is amazing close to reality. Developing a group of people with similar interests in a sport into a fantasy league is a sure-fire way of building strong relationships and communication between people. Developing a league takes a little time to set it up but the effort is far worth it. To begin the design and structure of a fantasy league simply get on the internet and do a search for Fantasy Sports and that will take you a long way in understanding how to begin. If you are interested in Fantasy Football, contact Patrick Heise, the Bender Hall Coordinator, as he is well versed in what it takes to run a successful fantasy football league.

Book of Questions (Conversational)

There are several different types of small books out there that are filled with intriguing, debatable, and silly random questions that are fun to discover with a small group of people. Have Book of Question Nights in your House. Mood of the room can go a long way in helping people share their insight and to feel comfortable in talking. Close the door, dim the lights, play some background music, and have people seated comfortably. Rotate the book of questions so everyone gets to ask and answer questions.

Wonder Years (Conversational)

The TV show Wonder Years has brought people together. Watch an episode or two and it will pull you in. Often times the topics in Wonder Years shows are similar to common experiences people share in growing up. After the episodes it can be a wonderful opportunity to share the things that people can relate to in the episode while growing up. Reruns of Wonder Years air all the time, but if it isn't this TV Show maybe you can think of another one that people would rally around which would bring about discussion.

History UNI (Activity Based)

UNI is 125 years old this year and with that comes some excitement. You could work with a group of people in obtaining information about how UNI has progressed over its history. Searching can be done through contacting the Archives Department in Rod Library 250 and/or contact staff or faculty that have been at UNI a long time to see if they have any anecdotal stories or facts about UNI. You could also do some searching on the residence hall and/or House in which you live. Findings could be displayed for the whole house or hall to see.

Question Jar (Conversational)

Find a fun looking Jar that you could use with a group to put any questions on small pieces of paper that they would like the group to discuss. The Jar could be kept in your room and whenever a LUG member thought of a question for a later discussion they could put it in the jar. Each time the group gets together they randomly select questions and discuss a wide variety of topics. The Jar could turn into something the group rallies around. Placing questions in the jar also allows people to be less vulnerable because no one knows who wrote the question.

Team Builder (Activity Based)

As a staff you will do many team builders and ice breakers over the course of the year. You also have access to a lot of people and resources that you could tap into to learn about a variety of activities. A LUG could be developed in which you facilitate these team builders/activities with them on a regular basis. Other staff members, particularly returners, and all the Hall Coordinators and Assistant Hall Coordinators are good resources as well. ResidentAssistant.Com is an excellent site for finding different activities too. As the LUG develops it may be worth trying to ask people in the group to facilitate an activity that you help them find.

Board Games (Activity Based)

Board Games are often a popular way of getting people together, helping them communicate, get to know each other, and have fun. A LUG could be developed in which a small group plays a different board game each time that you get together. Most Residence Halls have a few board games at the desk or you could ask around to see if anyone has some board games. Maybe your House would even like to purchase some board games for the house with house funds.

Movie Club (Activity / Conversational)

Most people have a favorite classic movie. Each person in this LUG could designate a particular classic movie that they have seen that potentially few people in the group have seen. Together the group could set aside time to watch these movies and then discuss the meaning in the movies in there is one. The LUG can also vote on the best to worst movies within the selection of movies. This could also be a LUG that watches new releases together as well.

City Limits (Activity Based)

Often there is far more going on in Cedar Falls and Waterloo than students at UNI know about. This LUG would discover things to do off campus in the area that would be fun and interesting to see or be apart of. The Waterloo Courier would be a good source to see what was going on in the Calendar of Events Section. Most Residence Halls subscribe to the Courier so that resource is right in your hall. The Waterloo Convention and Visitors Bureau Website is also a great source for area activities: www.waterloocvb.org/ Also the city of Cedar Falls has a website that would be helpful for this: www.ci.cedar-falls.ia.us/navTOC.htm

Energy Lugs (Activity/Conversational)

If the Freshman 15 doesn't sneak up on you the Sophomore 30 surely will. Students are often more active and involved in athletics in high school than they are in college, which turns into added weight as they adjust to the college experience. A LUG that supports exercise and healthy eating could be very beneficial. The group could develop individual and common goals. They could motivate each other and exercise together. You could have Joan Thompson come in to speak to your LUG about the right way to lose weight or get in better shape. You could buy a couple of health magazines to discuss. A point system could be developed like the program SUMMIT that happens in some building on campus.

Open Mike (Conversational)

Each person in the group has an opportunity to share whatever they would like and whatever is on their mind. People take turns sharing their thoughts and responding to what is being talked about. If people have a tough time getting started or bringing things up to talk about it may be helpful to have a current issues news article or paragraph to initiate discussion.

Family History (Conversational)

Participants could come together and discuss their background and experiences that they had growing up in the family and area that they grew up in. People could discuss the relationships that they have with their parents, siblings, and extended family and who they think they learned things from and who helped in making them who they are today. This could be an enhanced learning experience if a member of the group were an International Student. Discussions could also progress to what they want their family experience to be in the future if and when they have children. A fun tangible project that could be done with this group is to make Family Trees or develop ancestral records.

Pen Pal Lugs (Activity/ Conversational)

Pen Pals could be set up between your residents and residents from other universities – possibly universities from other countries. Although the written contact may be between one resident and their pen pal, the LUG could get together to share who their pen pal is and what they are learning from them and how their writing relationship is progressing. A couple other groups that Pen Pals could also be done with are children in Elementary Schools or with Elderly people in the community.

Cooking Lugs (Activity)

Creating different meals together experimenting and learning how to cook and bake a variety of foods. This could be done in conjunction with watching “Emerald” on the Food Channel.

Scholarship Oriented

Campus Resources (Activity Based)

Each week this group could visit a student services office on campus to build knowledge within the group on what resources are here for them while at UNI. This LUG would go a long way in increasing the success these students have while in college. Places to visit could be: Academic Advising Office, Academic Achievement Center, Career Center, Center for Multicultural Education, WRC Resources, Leadership Studies Program, and Public Safety to name a few. After a couple it would be even more beneficial to work with participants in the LUG and designate each person to contact and set up the meeting with the particular resource, taking the pressure off you as a staff member. This group could also go to special places on campus that are not necessarily educational like to the top of the Campanile or to the top of one of the Towers.

Study LUGs (Activity Based)

In a residence hall community it is sometimes hard for people to study at night because there often are things going on and people don't want to miss out on them so they neglect to study to take part in the fun opportunities. You can support the scholarly side of Residence Education through developing a Study LUG that sets aside time each week to “Get It Done” with the books. Some people can't study in groups of people but if you do get a group that can and is interested in doing this, these people may be comforted in knowing that more people are studying just like them and they are not missing out on anything. With this type of setting it would be important to lay down the ground rules so it is actually studying and not always an interrupted environment. Maybe take certain breaks where people can talk/vent about something they are studying. In order to get this to continue people have to be able to be productive.

Faculty Friendships (Conversational)

Too often students and professors don't get to know each other as well as they should. Sometimes students won't get to know anything about a professor except that they teach them about Biology, Accounting, or Math for Teachers. Developing a LUG that has students reaching out to professors to get to know them would be an adventure not yet explored. This small group of students could select some professors to set up appointments with just to sit down and chat and get to know who they are. In turn professors would get to know who you are and they would become more in tune with what it is like to be a college student today versus when they were in college.

Major Issues (Conversational)

LUGS could be formed by academic major and participants get together to discuss things in relation to their chosen career path. Classes that people are currently taking may come up, tips can come from upperclassman or from people that have already taken classes that someone else is in. Books can be shared or swapped. Participants could also bring related news that is happening in the job market as well.

Career Decisions (Activity/ Conversational)

Many students are undecided majors or are even unclear about the major they have temporarily declared. This group could work on discovering what it is they really would like to pursue. People could share their current thoughts about what they think their talents are and what type of setting they might want to work in. Together this group could support and bounce ideas off of one another. They also could make trips to the Career Center and develop a relationship with the Professional Staff there who can provide a lot of insight and resources to help students figure out what to major in.