



Use of Learning Communities Sessions to Develop Medical Student Understanding of Ethics Concepts and Principles

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- Structured teaching of ethics in medical education has typically occurred primarily in the pre-clerkship portions of the curriculum, with only occasional and sporadic opportunities for teaching ethics in the clinical years
- Pre-clerkship instruction is important for laying a conceptual foundation for ethics, yet it lacks the most relevant and immediate context for learning ethics provided by routine clinical involvement in patient care





College Mentors



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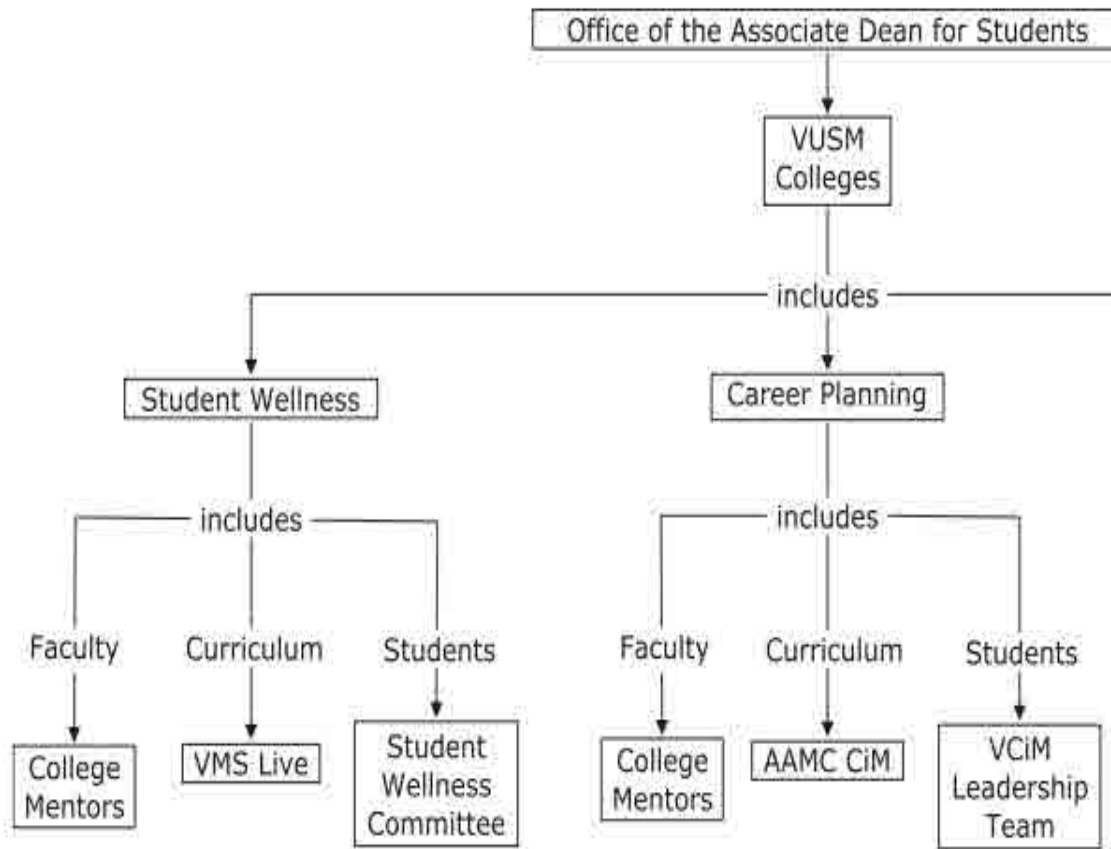


Figure 2 Colleges restructured as learning communities, Vanderbilt University School of Medicine (VUSM), 2011. VMS Live is a longitudinal wellness curriculum delivered in annual wellness retreats over the four years of medical school. AAMC CiM indicates Association of American Medical Colleges Careers in Medicine (<https://www.aamc.org/students/medstudents/cim/>); VCiM, Vanderbilt Careers in Medicine.





Learning Communities

- Definition:
 - “intentionally developed longitudinal groups that aim to enhance students’ medical school experience and to maximize learning”
- Function by:
 - fostering communication among students and faculty
 - promoting caring, trust, and teamwork
 - assisting students establish academic/support networks
 - encouraging student participation in learning activities





VUSM Learning Communities

- Seek to maximize learning, specifically related to student development as professionals

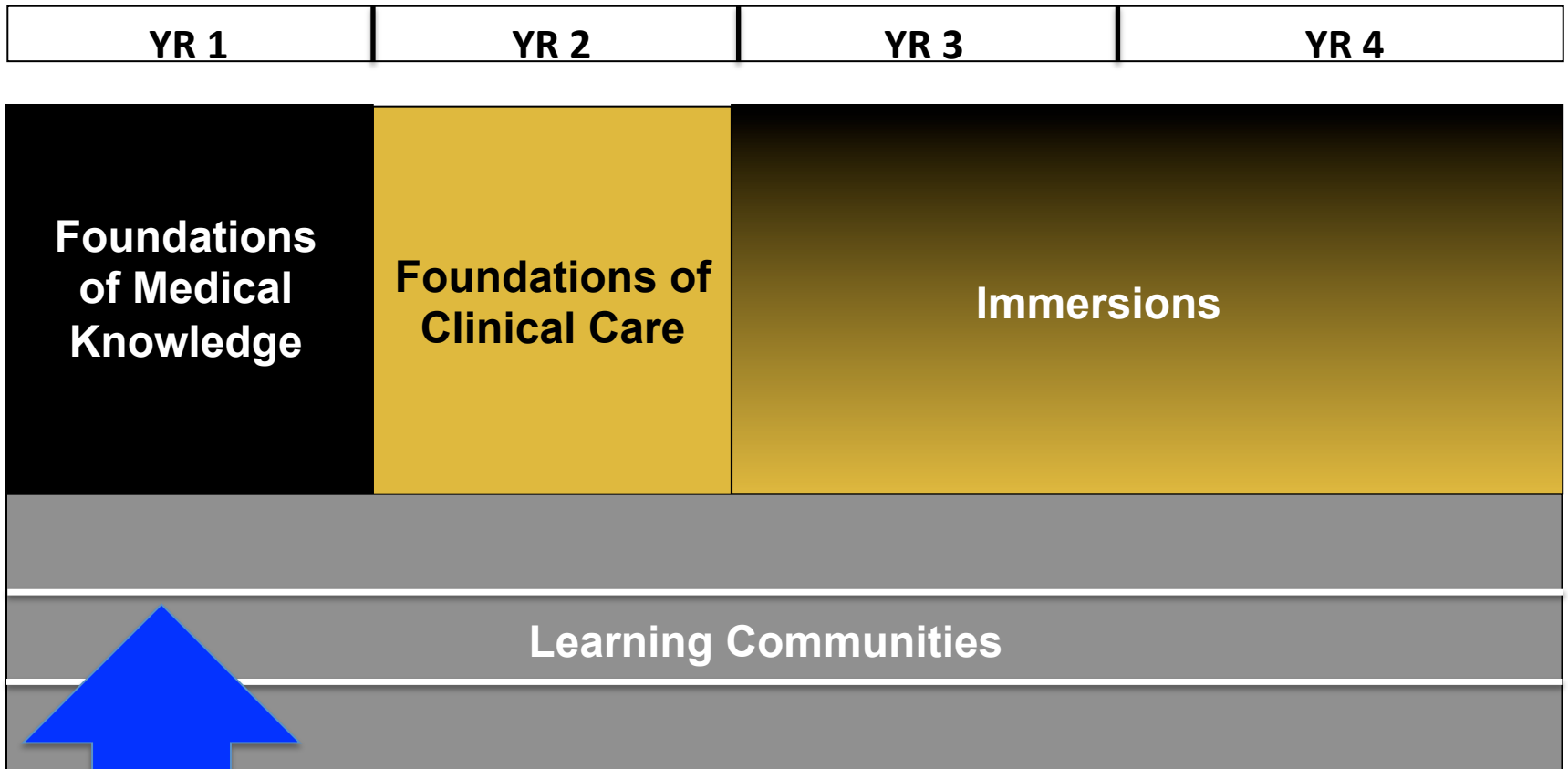


Elements of VUSM Curriculum 2.0

YR 1	YR 2	YR 3	YR 4
Foundations of Medical Knowledge	Foundations of Clinical Care	Immersions	
Learning Communities			



Elements of VUSM Curriculum 2.0





1st Year Curriculum—Typical Week

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8 AM - Noon	Case-based Small Group	Large/Medium Group or Lab	Case-based Small Group	Large/Medium Group or Lab	Case-based Small Group
	Large/Medium Group or Lab		Large/Medium Group or Lab		Large/Medium Group or Lab
1 PM – 5 PM	Clinic, Physical Diagnosis, OR Self-Directed Learning	Clinic, Physical Diagnosis, OR Self-Directed Learning	Clinic, Physical Diagnosis, OR Self-Directed Learning	Clinic, Physical Diagnosis, OR Self-Directed Learning	Large/Medium Group or Lab
					Physical Diagnosis





VUSM Learning Communities

- Typical Session
 - Pre-class Assigned Readings (25 pages)
 - Post a question about the readings in an online reading forum
 - 30 minute “Context Talk”
 - Group discussion about the topics, facilitated by College Mentors





VUSM Learning Communities

- Learning Environment





VUSM Learning Communities

- Learning Environment





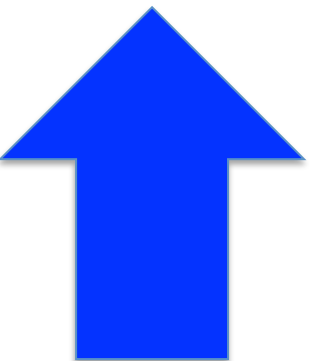
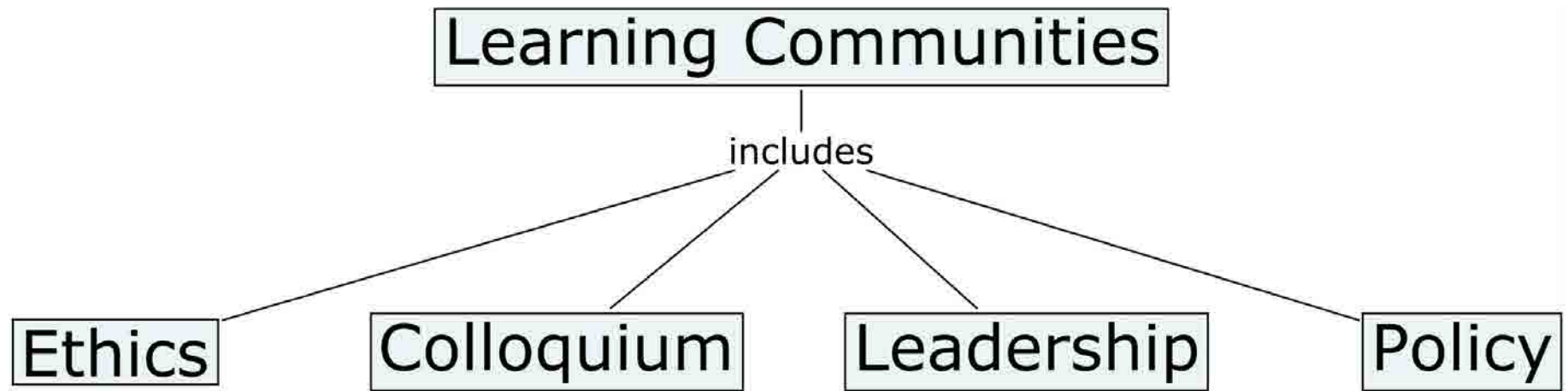
VUSM Learning Communities

- The academic sessions are
 - Developmentally appropriate as the you progress through the phases of the curriculum
 - Effectively integrated with other course and clerkship efforts





Overview





1st Year Session Topics

Medical Ethics: Traditional Norms and Modern Principles

Virtue Ethics and Conscience in Medicine

Informed Consent, Truth-telling, and Shared Decision-Making

Genetics: Ethical issues in Screening, Testing and Therapy

Medical Research Ethics

Ethics at the End-of-Life

Ethics in the Public Health Role of the Physician

Ethics in Social and Medical Policy: Distributive Justice

Confidentiality: Ethical and Legal Dimensions

Religion/Spirituality and Worldview in Healthcare



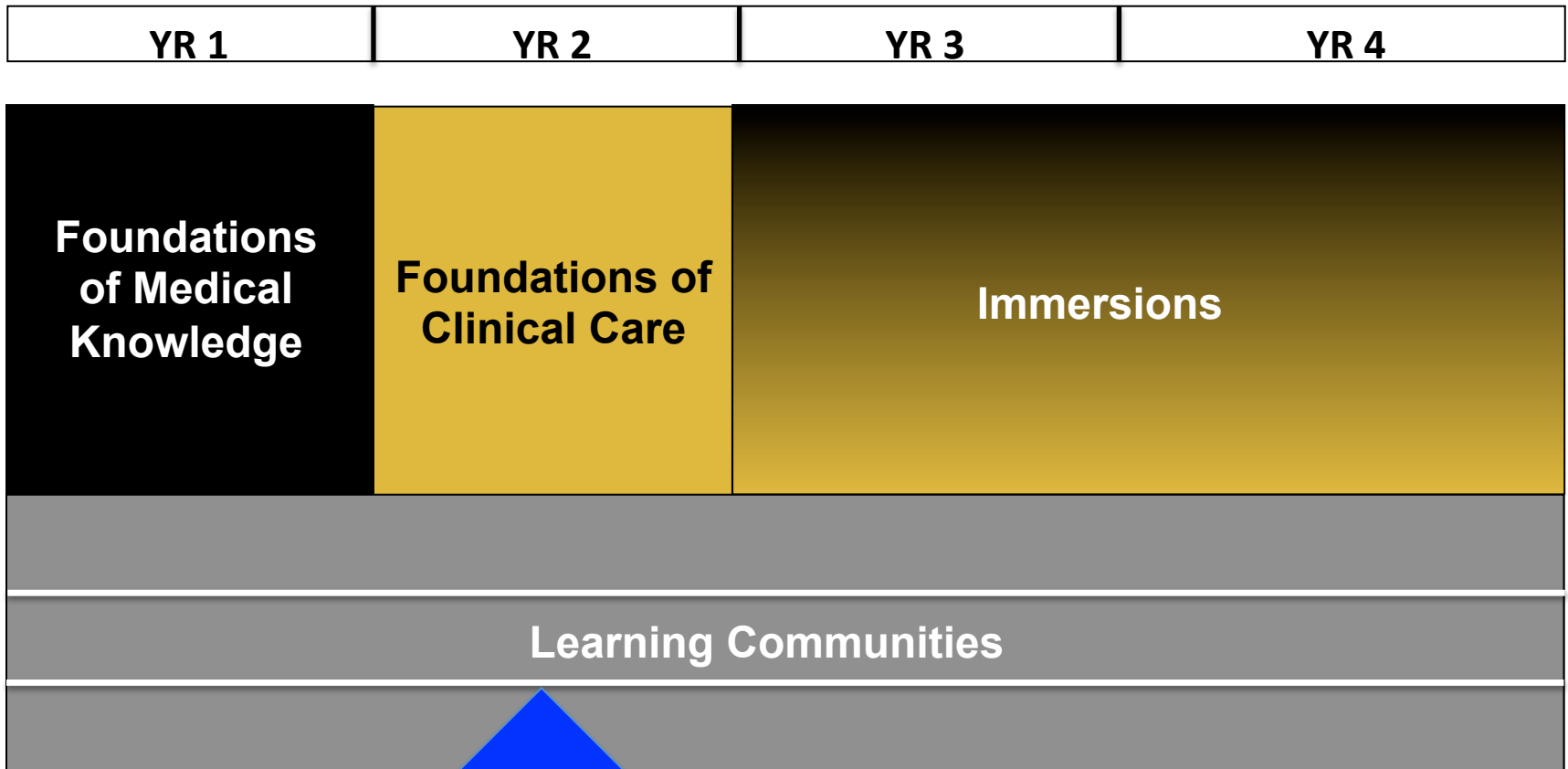


1st Year Course Evaluation 15-16

Course Evaluation Questions (5-point scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree)	% Who Agree/ Strongly Agree	
	AY14-15	AY15-16
Motivated me to continue learning in this area	77%	72%
Contributed to my professional development as a physician	89%	89%



Elements of VUSM Curriculum 2.0



2nd Year Clerkship Phase

	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Week 1		Longitudinal Interession Day					
Week 2							
Week 3							
Week 4							
Week 5		Longitudinal Interession Day					
Week 6							
Week 7							
Week 8							

2nd Year Clerkship Phase

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:00 AM- Noon	Longitudinal Interession Day				
1:00 PM-5: PM		Clerkship	Clerkship	Clerkship	Clerkship

**Learning
Communities
Sessions**



VUSM 2nd Year Learning Communities

Ethics Discussion

- Complete Topic readings **BEFORE** session
- Response question or case posted to online reading forums. Students will post a question regarding the ethics reading or suggest a case they've seen on the wards that demonstrates the ethics principles to be discussed
- **CLERKSHIP-based discussions**
 - Groups split based on clerkship rotation
 - Utilizes faculty members from the Center for Biomedical Ethics & Society (**Pairing Clinicians with Ethics Faculty**)
- Ethics essay that will be completed by students in the week following the session. The Ethics essay will be 1-2 pages in length





VUSM 2nd Year Learning Communities

CLERKSHIP-Based Ethics Discussions

Medicine—Navigating the End of Life

Surgery—Informed Consent

Pediatrics—Parental Refusal of Care

Psychiatry/Neurology—Capacity assessments and ethical implications

OB/GYN—Developing practical approaches in clinical medical ethics and women's health





2nd Year Course Evaluation 15-16

Course Evaluation Questions (5-point scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree)	% who Agree/ Strongly Agree (n=94)
The discussion with my clerkship group and the Ethics faculty helps deepen my understanding of ethical issues.	67%
Pairing Ethics faculty with clinical faculty strengthens the discussion of the topic.	73%
Completing the written essay after the ethics session helps solidify my understanding of the topics.	41%





Qualitative Course Evaluation Comments

Comments

Really great to spend time discussing with classmates and college mentors every week. Had some great discussions about **difficult topics**

I think LC was a great time to talk about **difficult and complex topics** that we would not otherwise be able to talk about in other parts of our classes. It was **a safe space** that allowed open discussion between peers which was nice **to see different view** points.

Having **direct contact with key faculty** members at this stage of our education is really valuable. We can benefit a great deal from this mentorship.

It would be nice to split in to **smaller groups** for discussion from time to time. It is difficult to have a conversation between 20 people at the same time and smaller groups might invited more students to contribute more often.

Learning communities could **incorporate more current ethical debates**. At times the topics seemed repetitive, and these sessions could be a place for current topics.





Critical Lessons Learned

- 1) Importance of a safe trusting space for discussion and growth
- 2) Effective small group guidance/facilitation is mandatory
- 3) Practical and tangible application of ethical concepts is essential
- 4) Providing a space to process/debrief “hidden curriculum” elements seen during clinical time





Questions?



For further questions, email Bill.Cutrer@Vanderbilt.Edu

