



Research Brief

Spring 2013 Learning Communities Evaluation Results from Students in the Title V Transfer Prep Program

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**Purpose of Brief:**

This brief examines the data from the Spring 2013 Learning Communities (LC) Student Evaluation completed by 53 Transfer Prep students.

**Summary of findings:**

- 80% or more of the respondents "Strongly Agreed" or "Agreed" with the following evaluation statements:
  - I would recommend joining a learning community to other students.
  - I am satisfied with my learning community experience.
  - Participating in a learning community helped me develop connections with other students.
  - Being part of a learning community made me feel more supported in my choice to go to college.
  - I felt comfortable asking questions and making contributions in class discussions.
  - I worked with other students in my learning community outside of class.
- 49% of respondents were Hispanic and 32% were Caucasian.
- 62% of the respondents were male and 53% were 19 years-old or younger.

**Overview**

In Spring 2013, Crafton offered Learning Communities to students in the Title V STEM Program, Transfer Prep Program, and in Developmental Courses. Students participating in a LC were provided the opportunity to evaluate their LC at the closing of the semester.

**Methodology**

Figure 1 and Tables 1 and 3-6 illustrate the results from the **Spring 2013 Learning Communities (LC) Student Evaluation from students in the Title V Transfer Prep program**. Table 2 illustrates student demographics disaggregated by ethnicity, gender and age. Responses to the evaluation were submitted by Transfer Prep students who participated in the following LCs:

- **CHC-099X4/ENGL 015/MATH 090**
- **SPEECH 100/GEOG 120**
- **READ 100/ENGL 101**

Respondents were provided an evaluation where they were asked what LC they were enrolled in and to rate ten statements about their experience in their LC. Respondents rated their level of agreement with the statements on a Likert five-point scale, 5=Strongly Agree; 4=Agree; 3=Disagree; 2=Strongly Disagree; 1=Not Applicable (see Table 1). "Not Applicable" or "missing" responses were removed in Tables 1 and 2. Respondents were also prompted to provide open-ended comments about their definition of a LC, what they liked best about participating in a LC, what they would change about their LC, and to add any other comments in Tables 3-6. The names have been removed in the open-ended comment tables and replaced with "[Name]" to protect identities.

**Table 1.** Responses to statements about the Spring 2013 Learning Communities at Crafton.

| Statement   | Strongly Agree |      | Agree |      | Disagree |      | Strongly Disagree |     | Total     |
|---|----------------|------|-------|------|----------|------|-------------------|-----|-----------|
|   | #              | %    | #     | %    | #        | %    | #                 | %   |           |
| I would recommend joining a learning community to other students.   | 25             | 47.2 | 22    | 41.5 | 5        | 9.4  | 1                 | 1.9 | <b>53</b> |
| I am satisfied with my learning community experience.   | 24             | 45.3 | 27    | 50.9 | 1        | 1.9  | 1                 | 1.9 | <b>53</b> |
| Participating in a learning community helped me develop connections with faculty and staff.   | 21             | 40.4 | 24    | 46.2 | 7        | 13.5 | 0                 | -   | <b>52</b> |
| Participating in a learning community helped me develop connections with other students.  | 33             | 62.3 | 17    | 32.1 | 3        | 5.7  | 0                 | -   | <b>53</b> |
| Being part of a learning community made me feel more supported in my coursework.  | 16             | 31.4 | 24    | 47.1 | 10       | 19.6 | 1                 | 2.0 | <b>51</b> |
| Being part of a learning community made me feel more supported in my choice to go to college.   | 17             | 34.7 | 23    | 46.9 | 9        | 18.4 | 0                 | -   | <b>49</b> |
| Being in a learning community has helped me see connections among my classes (for example, learning in one class supported or expanded on what I learned in another class). | 21             | 39.6 | 21    | 39.6 | 10       | 18.9 | 1                 | 1.9 | <b>53</b> |
| I felt comfortable asking questions and making contributions in class discussions.  | 25             | 48.1 | 25    | 48.1 | 2        | 3.8  | 0                 | -   | <b>52</b> |
| I worked with other students in my learning community outside of class.   | 24             | 47.1 | 19    | 37.3 | 7        | 13.7 | 1                 | 2.0 | <b>51</b> |
| The instructors in my learning community planned assignments together.  | 24             | 45.3 | 25    | 47.2 | 4        | 7.5  | 0                 | -   | <b>53</b> |

Note: Responses to a "non-applicable" point scale were omitted in this table and some respondents did not answer all the questions.

**Table 2.** Learning Community Student Demographic Information.

| Ethnicity                      | Transfer Prep LCs |            | Spring 2013 |            |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|------------|-------------|------------|
|                                | #                 | %          | #           | %          |
| Asian                          | 3                 | 5.7        | 298         | 5.5        |
| African American               | 6                 | 11.3       | 409         | 7.5        |
| Hispanic                       | 26                | 49.1       | 2197        | 40.5       |
| Native American/Alaskan Native | 1                 | 1.9        | 105         | 1.9        |
| Caucasian                      | 17                | 32.1       | 2415        | 44.5       |
| <b>Total</b>                   | <b>53</b>         | <b>100</b> | <b>5424</b> | <b>100</b> |
| Gender                         | #                 | %          | #           | %          |
| Female                         | 20                | 37.7       | 2832        | 52.0       |
| Male                           | 33                | 62.3       | 2609        | 48.0       |
| <b>Total</b>                   | <b>53</b>         | <b>100</b> | <b>5441</b> | <b>100</b> |
| Age                            | #                 | %          | #           | %          |
| 19 or younger                  | 28                | 52.8       | 1408        | 25.8       |
| 20-24                          | 14                | 26.4       | 2454        | 45.0       |
| 25-29                          | 4                 | 7.5        | 725         | 13.3       |
| 30-34                          | 2                 | 3.8        | 313         | 5.7        |
| 35-39                          | 3                 | 5.7        | 173         | 3.2        |
| 40-49                          | 1                 | 1.9        | 241         | 4.4        |
| 50 and above                   | 1                 | 1.9        | 136         | 2.5        |
| <b>Total</b>                   | <b>53</b>         | <b>100</b> | <b>5450</b> | <b>100</b> |

Note: Any "missing" data was omitted in this table.

Tables 3-6 illustrate open-ended comments provided by students in response to four prompts about their experiences with learning communities.

Students defined learning communities in Table 3. **Most of the comments defined learning communities as classes, students or people that are grouped together.**

**Table 3. Open-ended comments about respondent definition of a Learning Community.**

- A class to help understand life/college situation with discussions.
- A created connection between subjects.
- A group of classes tied together, where the teachers work together to make assignments and help you succeed.
- A group of students (class size) that have the same set schedule/classes with teachers and students that are well acquainted.
- A group of classes linked together.
- A group of linked classes.
- A group of people who are in many classes together
- A group of students having the same classes simultaneously.
- A group of students who take more than 1 class together.
- A group of teachers and students that work together.
- A grouped environment of classes that work together for the success of its students.
- A learning community is a community built to help students succeed.
- A learning community is a small group of students who have two classes together, which are connected and they feed off of each other.
- A set of joint classes that work together to promote greater understanding of a subject.
- An immersion of two classes
- An individual process
- Basically two classes that are connected.
- Classes grouped together.
- Classes that are linked together
- Classes that are linked together.
- Classes that are linked with each other.
- Classes that are put together
- Classes working together to bring students, lesson plans, and learning together.
- Collaborative classes
- Group of classes joined.
- It is a community that is connected and helps the students stay connected.
- It's a collective group of students who work together in both classes to do well.
- Learning about the campus and about college
- Multiple courses tied in together to fulfill a specified purpose.
- Participating in speech and geography. And they affected each other.
- Students who take the same classes together. Teachers provide extra help than a normal class.
- Two classes combined sharing a goal.
- Two classes connected, where everyone from one class is also in the other. Encourages community, where us students will help and support each other
- Two classes designed to incorporate the same students to engage them in a special group founded on education.
- Two classes put together to pool resources.
- Two classes that are related and linked together.

- Two classes working together.
- Two courses blended together to teach with a shared theme.
- Two linked classes, with similar class settings and same students.
- Two professors paired up to teach a similar subject together. Working with a small knit group, the teaching/ learning process becomes very personal.
- Two related classes, taught with ideas that connect the curriculum.
- Two subjects with the same classmates.
- When two classes are linked together.
- When two classes come together to build off of each other, such as our assignments were related.
- Where classes are tied together.
- Where the classes are connected to help us learn better and get college started effectively.
- Where two classes are together.
- A class that stay together in two classes with an assigned counselor to all of the students.

In Table 4, respondents provided feedback about what they liked best about their participation in learning communities. **Most of the comments commended LCs and many supported that there were benefits from establishing strong connections to faculty and to peers. As an illustration three students stated they liked the following: “The connections with the students and teachers since we’re together all the time”, “I like the interactivity and more personal connection I feel towards the instructors and students”, and “I overcame my fear of social anxiety.”**

**Table 4.** Open-ended comments about what respondents liked best about participating in a Learning Community.

- Comfortable classes
- Develop connections with students/faculty
- Gaining relations with the same classmates
- Geography and Speech. Speech was like a preparatory class, prepared me for Geography.
- Getting to know more people here and the services here.
- Getting to meet other students.
- Going over my transfer plan.
- Got to meet new people.
- Having the same people around in both classes.
- Having the same people in the classes and being comfortable.
- I got to know people a little better and that helped me learn from them.
- I have the same people in my classes so it's easier to get help.
- I interacted and got along with everyone in my class, and it was easier to communicate.
- I like the interactivity and more personal connection I feel towards the instructors and students.
- I liked being able to work with other students that I would see in my other classes and establishing friendships with them.
- I liked that my teachers stayed in touch with each other and the students also had the opportunity to get acquainted.
- I liked the connection I developed with [Name].
- I loved all of the guest speakers that came to our class.
- I loved my speech class, and the great friendships I developed.

- I made some new friends and felt a part of the class.
- I met and connected with staff and students.
- I'm sort of impartial to learning communities.
- It has direct connection to each other to make it easier to learn.
- It made classes much more fluid and cohesive.
- I overcame my fear of social anxiety.
- It was fun to try this and there is a lot of peer interaction.
- It was related to food and the different aspects in both classes related to the subject.
- Meeting new people
- Meeting new people.
- Meeting people that were all having the same classwork.
- Professor accessibility
- Seeing familiar faces.
- Seeing my classmates a second time in another class.
- Some of the friends I made.
- Teachers and students were easy-going, comfortable to be around.
- The ability to tie projects together to keep the same train of thought.
- The connections I built with other students
- The connections with the students and teachers since we're together all the time.
- The integration of the classes.
- The link between the two classes helps a lot because same classmates are in both.
- The reserved counselor.
- The SEP with my learning seminar class.
- The small things that one didn't know about.
- Was forced to get to know everyone.
- You get to bond with your classmates more.
- You get to work with students and your discussions can be useful.
- You were able to become comfortable with one another.
- Being in smaller, controlled class settings, I tend to participate more, and develop a stronger connection for the material being taught.
- Being with the same students in both classes.

Respondents provided diverse suggestions about what they would change about learning communities in Table 5. **Some comments included “More time with the learning community”, “I would change the rule that says if you don't pass one you don't pass all”, and “Have the three classes more intact and involve more projects that stay connected.”**

**Table 5.** Open-ended comments about what respondents would change about their Learning Communities.

- Allow a little time in class to work on group project.
- Being able to drop one without losing the others.
- Bothering the students more for a life plan.
- Changing theme would be better, food got really worn out.
- Find a different website other than Eureka.
- Have the three classes more intact and involve more projects that stay connected.
- Having a class with both teachers. One class per semester.

- I didn't have to take geography, so that would have been nice.
- I don't think it needs any changing.
- I think that these courses worked well together.
- I would change the rule that says if you don't pass one you don't pass all.
- I would like if the class was longer than an hour.
- I would link it with a different class than world geography.
- I would take out the fact that if you drop one class, you lose all three classes.
- I wouldn't change anything.
- It seemed that a lot of people didn't find the reading part important, so maybe make both halves just as important.
- Make geography much shorter.
- Maybe focus on different themes rather than one in a semester.
- Maybe having a group study class everyone goes to.
- Maybe more tutor support
- More chocolate.
- More linked assignments.
- More time with the learning community.
- More variety. Not only entry level classes
- N/A
- N/A
- Not to take math
- Nothing
- Nothing,
- Nothing, I'm satisfied.
- Nothing, the learning community flowed well.
- Nothing!
- Nothing.
- Nothing. The teachers work well together for this type of learning.
- Seemed like we were always behind and having to cram.
- The time of geography.
- They should have more of them.
- Well formatted, no change.
- Would not change anything in particular.

Respondents provided few comments in the additional open-ended section (see Table 6). **The comments included commendations to specific instructor teaching styles and methodologies. Other comments were improvement suggestions such as “I didn’t need Reading 100, just English 101, but this was the only class available and its extra class work; I didn’t need or want”, “Talking about food so much makes doing the work a little tedious at times”, and “Time flexibility; more morning and evening classes.”**

**Table 6.** Additional open-ended comments provided by respondents about Learning Communities.

- Both [Name] and [Name] are the best at what they do, and turned my lack of interest in reading/writing into a passion. I am thankful for them,
- [Name] and [Name] went above and beyond in order to make the class interesting while still learning. They mixed many styles (short videos, movies, field trips, guest speakers) that were

able to present a lot of new and interesting information. I loved it!

- Despite my concerns before, speech was one of my favorite classes I've ever taken. Not because I necessarily like speech, but I think it was my professor that made it the class that it was. He was one of the best teachers I've ever had, in all aspects of teaching.
- Enjoyed the class.
- Great learning experience!
- I didn't need Reading 100, just English 101, but this was the only class available and its extra class work; I didn't need or want.
- Learning community is a great way to get involved in your classes.
- N/A
- N/A
- No
- No Comment.
- Nope.
- [Name] and [Name] are great professors.
- Take [Name] for speech!
- Talking about food so much makes doing the work a little tedious at times.
- Thank you, this was my favorite class this semester.
- The teachers are great.
- This was fun!
- Time flexibility; more morning and evening classes.