



Office of
Research & Planning

Prepared by:
Amanda T. Saw

Research Briefs from the Office of Institutional Research Spring 2010 and Fall 2010 Learning Communities Questionnaire

Purpose:

The Learning Communities Student Success Questionnaire was administered to students participating in a learning community led by a counselor in different sections during Spring 2010 and Fall 2010. This brief combines the results from both semesters and links responses on the questionnaire to course grades and student success.

Summary of Findings:

- Out of 325 students in 13 sections with learning communities, 75% were successful (achieving a course grade of C or better) while 25% were not successful on their Learning Communities course.
- 71% of 271 respondents were planning to transfer to a four-year institution.
 - 59% did not have an educational plan.
 - 58% did not attend a new student orientation.
 - 49% had declared a major.
- 85% of the respondents reported that English was not their second language and 77% were full-time students.
- 52% of the respondents reported having trouble on tests due to nervousness or anxiety.
- 55% of the respondents reported feeling like they did not have enough time to complete everything.
- 70% of the respondents reported finding it easy to ask for help when needed and 83% knew about financial aid.
- 77% reported not needing help with special learning services, 88% reported that they did not need help with transportation, and 95% reported that they did not need daycare for children.
- 53% reported needing help with purchasing books.
- 95% reported being comfortable with other college students and understanding what is expected of college students.
- No statistically reliable differences could be detected between the successful learning community students and learning community students who did not achieve course success on background, status, stressors, needing help, fitting in, or academic self-ratings.
- Learning community students who successfully completed their course were substantially more likely to have declared a major (54%) than learning community students who did not successfully complete the course (44%).
- Learning community students who successfully completed their course were substantially more likely to have an intention to transfer (76%) than learning community students who did not successfully complete the course (67%).

Methodology:

The Effect Size statistic was used to indicate the size of the difference on background, status, stressors, needing help, fitting in, and academic self-ratings between learning

community students who successfully completed a course and those who did not successfully complete a course. One method of interpreting effect size was developed by Jacob Cohen. Jacob Cohen (1988) defined "small," "medium," and "large" effect sizes. He explained that an effect size of .20 can be considered small, an effect size of .50 can be considered medium, and an effect size of .80 can be considered large. An effect size is considered to be meaningful or substantial if it is .20 or higher. Equally important, if the lower end of the effect size confidence interval (CI) is above .20 it indicates that there is a 95% probability that the program or characteristic has a meaningful impact on the outcome. It is important to mention that the number of students in each group does not influence effect size; whereas, when statistical significance is calculated, the number of students in each group does influence the significance level (i.e. "p" value being lower than .05).

Sample:

There were a total of 325 students from 13 different sections from six different departments (College Life, English, Health, Reading, Sociology, and Theater Arts) who had the opportunity to complete the Success questionnaire during either Spring 2010 or Fall 2010. Out of these 325 students, 271 (83%) students completed either the whole of or parts of the questionnaire, while 54 (17%) did not complete the questionnaire at all.

Findings:

Overall out of the 325 students in the 13 sections with learning communities, 243 (75%) students were successful (achieving a course grade of C or better) while 82 (25%) students did not successfully complete the Learning Community course. Out of the 271 respondents, 212 students successfully completed the course (78%) and 59 had not successfully completed the course (22%).

There were slightly more respondents who had declared a major (49%) than those who had not declared a major (46%); and the majority of respondents (71%) were planning to transfer to a four-year institution (see Table 1). However, more than half of the respondents (59%) did not have an educational plan whereas only 40% did; and more than half (58%) did not attend a new student orientation, whereas only 40% did. The majority of respondents (89%) were not repeating either course. In addition, the majority of respondents did not report English to be their second language (85%).

Table 1: Number and Percent of Students who Responded "Yes" or "No" to Survey Statements about Educational Goals and Background (N = 271).

Statement	Yes		No		Missing	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Q1. Have you declared a major?	132	49	125	46	14	5
Q2. Are you planning to transfer to a four year university?	191	71	67	25	13	5
Q3. Do you have a student educational plan?	108	40	160	59	3	1
Q4. Are you repeating either of these courses?	25	9	242	89	4	2
Q5. Did you attend new student orientation?	108	40	156	58	7	3
Q6. Is English your second language?	40	15	231	85	0	0

The majority of respondents reported being a full-time student (77%, see Table 2). Most reported not working 20 hours or more (62%), while about a third (37%) reported doing so. The majority of respondents reported knowing about financial aid (83%).

Table 2: Number and Percent of Students who Responded "Yes" or "No" to Survey Statements about Student Status (N = 271).

Statement	Yes		No		Missing	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Q7. Are you a full-time student (12 units or more)?	209	77	60	22	2	1
Q8. Do you work more than 20 hours per week?	101	37	168	62	2	1
Q9. Do you know about financial aid?	225	83	45	16	1	0

Slightly more respondents reported having trouble on tests due to nervousness or anxiety (52%, see Table 3) than not having such trouble (47%). Similarly, more respondents reported feeling like they did not have enough time to complete everything (55%) than not feeling this way (45%). However, the majority of respondents reported finding it easy to ask for help when needed (70%). In addition, the vast majority (95%) reported not having a family situation that conflicted with their studies.

Table 3: Number and Percent of Students who Responded "Yes" or "No" to Survey Statements about Anxiety and other Stressors (N = 271).

Statement	Yes		No		Missing	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Q10. Do you ever have trouble on tests due to being nervous or anxious?	141	52	128	47	2	1
Q11. Do you ever feel like you don't have enough time to complete everything?	148	55	122	45	1	0
Q12. Is it easy for you to "ask for help" when you need help?	190	70	80	30	1	0
Q13. Does your family situation conflict with your studies?	41	15	228	84	0	0

The vast majority of respondents reported not needing help with special learning services, transportation, or daycare for children (77-95%, see Table 4). However, slightly more than half of the respondents (53%) reported needing help with books.

Table 4: Number and Percent of Students who Responded "Yes" or "No" to Survey Statements about Needing Help (N = 271).

Statement	Yes		No		Missing	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Q14. Do you need any other special learning services and/or support to be successful in your classes?	58	21	209	77	4	2
Q15. Do you need help with books?	144	53	127	47	0	0
Q16. Do you need help with transportation?	34	13	237	88	0	0
Q17. Do you need help with daycare for children?	14	5	256	95	0	0

Table 5 presents the results concerning how well the respondent reported "fitting in" and understanding the college system. Ninety-five percent of the respondents reported that they were comfortable with other college students, and that they understood the expectations of being a college student. Moreover, 79% of the respondents reported that they understood how the "college system" works.

Table 5: Number and Percent of Students who Responded "Yes" or "No" to Survey Statements about "Fitting In" (N = 271).

Statement	Yes		No		Missing	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Q18. Are you comfortable with other college students? (Do you "fit" in?)	255	95	16	6	0	0
Q19. Do you understand the expectations of being a college student?	255	95	15	6	1	0
Q20. Do you understand how the "college system" works?	213	79	58	21	0	0

Next, respondents self-rated their skills in five different academic areas: reading, writing, math, verbal, and computer skills. Responses ranged from excellent, good, fair, and poor (see Table 6). Seventy-four percent of the respondents rated their verbal skills as good or excellent, while 63% rated their writing skills as good or excellent. In addition, 70% of the respondents rated both their reading and computer skills as good or excellent. Conversely, only 43% of the respondents rated their math skills as good or excellent.

Table 6: Number and Percent of Student Self-Ratings on Academic Areas (N = 325).

Areas	Excellent		Good		Fair		Poor		Missing	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Reading	68	25	123	45	65	24	14	5	1	0
Writing	24	9	150	55	77	28	18	6	2	1
Math	28	10	90	33	99	37	52	19	2	1
Verbal	59	22	141	52	55	20	12	4	4	2
Computer	62	23	128	47	62	23	17	6	2	1

Comparing Students Who Successfully Completed the Learning Community Course with Those Who Did Not Successfully Complete the Learning Community Course

To compare the 212 respondents who were successful to the 59 who were not successful in their sections, a series of independent samples *t*-tests were conducted on responses to the different questions. None of these tests were statistically significant (*p*'s > .05, see Tables 7 and 8), indicating that no reliable differences could be detected between the students who achieved course success and those who did not on background, status, stressors, needing help, fitting in, and academic self-ratings. However, when looking at effect size, some of the differences were substantial.

On academic self-ratings, students who did not achieve success tended to rate themselves better on reading and writing than did successful students, while the reverse was true on math, verbal, and computer ratings (see Table 7). The most substantial difference between these two groups of students occurred on math self-ratings. Students who were successful in their Learning Community course, on average, rated themselves higher on mathematics skills (*M* = 2.39) than did students who were not successful (*M* = 2.21).

Some of the more substantial differences between these two groups concerned whether they had stated their goals or intentions (see Table 8). There was a trend for successful students to be more likely to have declared a major (54% vs. 44%), to have the intention to transfer to a four-year university (76% vs. 67%), and knowing the expectations of being

a college student (96% vs. 90%). Yet successful students also reported having more challenges. Successful students were more likely to report needing help with books (56% vs. 44%), having a family situation that conflicts with their studies (17% vs. 10%). In contrast, students who did not achieve course success were more likely to be repeating the course (14% vs. 8%) and to feel like they did not have enough time to complete everything (64% vs. 52%).

Overall, none of the comparisons between successful students and students not achieving course success reached statistical significance; accordingly, caution must be used in interpreting these differences between the groups of students.

Table 7: Number and Average Academic Self-Ratings of Successful Students vs. Students Not Achieving Success, Effect Sizes (ES), and p-values (N = 271).

	Not Achieving Success			Successful				95% CI for <i>ES</i>		
Academic Area	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	<i>ES</i>	Lower	Upper	p-value
Reading	58	2.98	.78	212	2.89	.85	-.11	-.40	.18	.42
Writing	58	2.71	.62	211	2.66	.76	-.07	-.36	.22	.62
Math	58	2.21	.95	211	2.39	.90	.20	-.09	.49	.20
Verbal	57	2.89	.86	210	2.93	.76	.05	-.24	.34	.76
Computer	57	2.86	.95	212	2.88	.81	.02	-.27	.32	.90

References:

Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences* (2nd ed.). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Table 8: Number and Percent of Successful Students vs. Students Not Achieving Success on Responding "Yes" to Statements, Effect Sizes (ES), and p-values (N = 271).

Statement	Not Achieving Success		Successful		ES	95% CI for ES		p-value
	N	%	N	%		Lower	Upper	
Q1. Have you declared a major?	57	44	200	54	.20	-.10	.49	.20
Q2. Are you planning to transfer to a four year university?	57	67	201	76	.21	-.09	.50	.18
Q3. Do you have a student educational plan?	58	36	210	41	.10	-.19	.39	.47
Q4. Are you repeating either of these courses?	59	14	208	8	-.21	-.49	.08	.05
Q5. Did you attend new student orientation?	59	41	205	41	.00	-.29	.29	.97
Q6. Is English your second language?	59	12	212	16	.11	-.18	.40	.45
Q7. Are you a full-time student (12 units or more)?	58	76	211	78	.05	-.24	.34	.71
Q8. Do you work more than 20 hours per week?	59	41	210	37	-.08	-.37	.21	.58
Q9. Do you know about financial aid?	58	78	212	85	.19	-.10	.48	.23
Q10. Do you ever have trouble on tests due to being nervous or anxious?	59	53	210	52	-.02	-.31	.27	.98
Q11. Do you ever feel like you don't have enough time to complete everything?	59	64	211	52	-.24	-.53	.05	.09
Q12. Is it easy for you to "ask for help" when you need help?	59	71	211	70	-.02	-.31	.27	.88
Q13. Does your family situation conflict with your studies?	58	10	211	17	.19	-.10	.48	.19
Q14. Do you need any other special learning services and/or support to be successful in your classes?	58	17	209	23	.15	-.15	.44	.33
Q15. Do you need help with books?	59	44	212	56	.24	-.05	.53	.12
Q16. Do you need help with transportation?	59	15	212	12	-.09	-.38	.20	.51
Q17. Do you need help with daycare for children?	58	9	212	4	-.23	-.52	.07	.27
Q18. Are you comfortable with other college students? (Do you "fit" in?)	59	95	212	94	-.04	-.33	.25	.75
Q19. Do you understand the expectations of being a college student?	59	90	211	96	.26	-.03	.55	.17
Q20. Do you understand how the "college system" works?	59	73	212	80	.17	-.12	.46	.26

*Differences with a p-value of .20 or less are bolded