



Results of Crafton Hills College Learning Communities Evaluation

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Purpose of Brief

Review results of student surveys from the Learning Communities.

Summary of Findings

- 54 students in 3 LCs completed the survey
- Students participating in an LC were **most likely** to agree with the following two statements:
 - Participating in a Learning Community helped me develop connections with other students.
 - I worked with other students in my Learning Community outside of class.
- Students participating in an LC were **least likely** to agree with the following two statements:
 - Participating in a Learning Community helped me develop connections with faculty and staff.
 - I would recommend joining a Learning Community to other students.

Overview

Learning Communities at Crafton Hills College consist of cohorts of students who take two or more courses together in the same semester. For example, one Learning Community offered in Fall 2014 and titled “You Are What You Eat” linked ENGL 101 (Freshman Composition) and READ 100 (College Academic Reading). Research has indicated that students who participate in Learning Communities earn higher GPAs, have lower dropout rates, finish college sooner, and are more satisfied with college.^{1,2} Expansion of Learning Communities at Crafton Hills College is part of the Title V Hispanic-Serving Institutions Program Grant. At the end of the Fall 2014 semester, students participating in 3 Learning Communities (LC) completed surveys about their experience (see Table 1).

Methodology

Students rated their agreement with 10 statements regarding their participation in a Learning Community; these results are presented in Table 2. The first column lists the statements, the second column (“N”) shows the number of students who responded to the item, the column entitled “Min” shows the lowest response on the scale, the column entitled “Max” shows the highest response on the scale, the column “Mean” shows the average rating, and the last column shows the standard deviation. Respondents rated whether or not they agreed with the statements on a four-point Likert scale as follows:

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Agree
- 4 = Strongly Agree

If the Min (lowest) score was a “3”, that means that none of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. If the Max score was a “4”, that means that at least one respondent strongly agreed with the statement. As an illustration, if the mean score was 3.65, that would indicate that, on average, respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Table 2 is arranged by mean score in descending order.

¹ Center for Student Success, The Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges. (2007). Basic Skills as a Foundation for Student Success in California Community Colleges.

²Venit, E. (2008). The Next Five Percent: Student Retention Strategies for Selective Public Universities. Educational Advisory Board Custom Research Brief.

Sample: A total of 54 students in the 3 Learning Communities completed the survey. Fall 2014 Learning Communities are listed in Table 1. Results are limited to three LCs: You Are What You Eat, Writing Ourselves, and Digital Natives. Therefore, results may only be generalized to these three LCs.

Table 1: Learning Communities participating in survey.

Name of Learning Community	Constituent Courses	# Respondents
You Are What You Eat	ENGL 101, READ 100	21
Writing Ourselves	ENGL 976, READ 980, CHC 090	13
Digital Natives: Exploring the Role of Media in Our Lives	ENGL 102, PSYCH 100	20
Bioethics	ENGL 102, BIOL 100, BIOL Lab	0
Math Fast Track 1	MATH 952, MATH, MATH 090, MATH 903, CHC 090, CHC 100	0
Math Fast Track 2	MATH 090, MATH 095, CHC 090, MATH 903, CHC 100	0
Math Fast Track 3	MATH 952, MATH 090, MATH 903, CHC 090, CHC 100	0
Math Fast Track 4	MATH 090, MATH 095, MATH 903, CHC 090, CHC 100	0
Accelerating Calculus	MATH 102, MATH 103	0
Total		54

Findings

In general, respondents rated their experiences positively. Respondents were most likely to agree that participating in a Learning Community helped them develop connections with other students (mean = 3.51) and students worked with other students in their Learning Community outside of the classroom (mean = 3.49). They were least likely to agree to recommend that other students join a Learning Community (mean = 3.22) and participating in a Learning Community helped them develop connections with faculty and staff (mean = 3.35).

Table 2: Students' ratings of the Learning Community experience.

Rate the degree to which you agree with the following statements.	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Participating in a Learning Community helped me develop connections with other students.	53	2	4	3.51	.54
I worked with other students in my Learning Community outside of class.	51	2	4	3.49	.58
Being part of a Learning Community made me feel more supported in my choice to go to college.	51	2	4	3.49	.61
Being part of a Learning Community made me feel more supported in my coursework.	54	2	4	3.46	.57
I am satisfied with my Learning Community experience.	53	2	4	3.42	.57
The instructors in my Learning Community planned assignments together.	53	2	4	3.40	.57
Being in a Learning Community helped me feel comfortable asking questions and making contributions in class discussions.	53	2	4	3.38	.63
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).	53	2	4	3.36	.59
Participating in a Learning Community helped me develop connections with faculty and staff.	54	2	4	3.35	.70
I would recommend joining a Learning Community to other students.	54	1	4	3.22	.77

Table 3 lists the themes of responses to the question: “What is a Learning Community?” Twenty-three respondents stated an LC was, “A Community where classes are linked together with a common theme.” While 12 respondents stated, “Classes that are combined and taken together as a group.”

Table 3: Respondents understanding of a Learning Community.

What is a Learning Community?	# Respondents
A community where classes are linked together with a common theme.	23
Classes that are combined and taken together as a group	12
A group of students who take multiple classes together.	5
Bringing students together to work as a team.	3

Comments that did not fit into categories are listed below:

- An opportunity for students to get the most out of their classes as well as establish a strong work ethic.
- An organization that helps me build a relationship with students.
- Being more involved in learning with peers.
- Classes where they teach you the methods you should have mastered K-12.
- Having multiple units working together.
- I never really memorized the official definition.

Table 4 lists the themes of response to the question: “What did you like best about participating in a Learning Community?” Fifteen respondents stated, “Having the same classmates for all of the courses.” While 6 respondents stated, “Getting to know other students and making friends.”

Table 4: What respondents liked about the Learning Community.

What did you like best?	# Respondents
Having the same classmates for all of the courses	15
Getting to know other students and making friends	6
The connection between the classmates and instructors	6
Fun activities made class more interesting	6
Enjoyed having the same instructor for both classes.	2
Similarity in assignments.	2

Comments that did not fit into categories are listed below:

- It was helpful, understandable, consistent, and beneficial.
- Learning about others.
- Meeting new people.
- My understanding of the going in both classes were qualified.
- Other students, diversity.
- I learn very well in this.
- I like both classes but the psych class had problems trying to link media with the quizzes.
- I liked the common theme within the learning community.
- Small, intimate classes.
- Students educational planning.
- The class ambience and interaction.
- The discussions.
- The helpfulness of the staff.
- We worked together in class.

Table 5 lists the themes of responses to the question: “What would you change about the Learning Community?” Seventeen respondents stated, “No changes to Learning Community.” While three respondents stated, “The dis-organization at times.”

Table 5: What would you change about the Learning Community?

What would you change?	# Respondents
No changes to Learning Community	17
The dis-organization at times	3
Better connection between courses	3
Find a better way to integrate English and Psychology classes	2
To give less homework	2

Suggested changes that did not fit into these categories are listed below:

- I would make Morgan Freeman a guest speaker that would be chill.
- I would maybe change having less revisions and fixes on paper so often.
- Meet once a week for READ 100.
- Not have the major assignments such as essays due after field trips. I need the in class time to talk to the teachers. Move them to just after.
- Not much, this is the second learning community that I've taken and I enjoyed both of them.
- That if we fail in one are then we fail the whole learning community classes.
- The second class didn't really teach new but still tested on things we read at home.
- This class has turned me into a better student and more positive.
- To learn more and get more out of the reading class.