



Research Briefs from Crafton Hills Office of Research and Planning

Learning Communities; Student Success Questionnaire Fall 2009

Overview: A learning community (LC) is a connected cluster of courses that a small group of students take together to provide a deeper understanding of course subject matter. Participation in a learning community provides several benefits and have the following characteristics: Course curriculum is integrated because two or more courses are linked by a common theme; a cohort of students establish academic and social networks; students complete assignments and activities that help develop their general academic study skills; faculty interact closely with each other and their students to support success.

In the fall 2009 semester, 15 faculty (both instructional and counseling) and more than 200 students were involved in six different learning community combinations. In an effort to develop ongoing institutional support, the college implemented several support mechanisms for learning communities, including a small stipend for all LC practitioners; a half-day orientation to the CHC LC Initiative; an all-day in-house LC training retreat, and the identification of specific counselors to work collaboratively with each of the instructors involved in the learning communities.

Specifically, the *CHC 2009-2010 BSI Action Plan*, called for the integration of counseling/advising and other support services into all LCs. The results from the *Student Success Questionnaire* illustrated here will serve as a guide for advisement for all LC students. The purpose of this brief is to examine results of the *Student Success Questionnaire* which include college readiness; skills and abilities; and background factors and life experiences of the students enrolled in the fall 2009 learning communities at Crafton Hills College (CHC).

Summary of Findings:

- Sixty-five percent of the respondents indicated that they had attended the new student orientation.
- The majority of students intend to transfer to a four year university (72%).
- Students enrolled in learning communities were more likely to rate their math skills as fair or poor (56%).
- Students were more likely to be enrolled full-time (83%) and work less than 20 hours per week (67%).

Methodology: The Crafton Hills College (CHC) Office of Research and Planning (ORP) in collaboration with the Counseling Office developed and administered an in class paper survey questionnaire between September 16th and October 15th 2009. Participants were asked to provide their name, date, career goal, and academic major. The survey included nine yes/no dichotomous response questions related to college readiness. A four-point Likert scale requested students rate their skills as Excellent, Good, Fair, or poor in five areas. In addition, background factors and life experiences were captured in eleven yes/no dichotomous response questions.

Sample: As seen in Table 1, there were six learning communities with a total of one hundred forty-two respondents who participated in completing the Student Success Questionnaire during the fall 2009 semester.

Table 1 Fall 2009: CHC- Learning Communities		N	%
Democracy and Education		20	14
Ghosts of Southern California		25	18
Living in the I.E. (Inland Empire)		21	15
On Course to Success		32	23
Our Dynamic Cultures		22	15
The Self and Society		22	15
Total		142	100

Findings: As can be seen in Table 2, the majority of respondents reported that they attended the new student orientation (65%). Overall, respondents were more likely to indicate that they intend to transfer to a four year university (72%) and have a declared major (58%). However, half of the respondents indicated that they do not have an educational plan.

Approximately half of the participants have trouble on tests due to being anxious or nervous (51%), and feel that they don't have enough time to complete everything (49%). Furthermore, 78% of the respondents feel that they do not require special support or learning services.

Table 2 College Readiness	Yes		No		Total
	N	%	N	%	
Have you declared a major	78	58	57	42	135
Are you planning to transfer to a four year university?	96	72	37	28	133
Do you have a student educational plan?	66	50	65	50	131
Are you repeating either of these courses?	11	8	129	92	140
Did you attend new student orientation?	91	65	49	35	140
Do you ever have trouble on tests due to being nervous or anxious?	71	51	69	49	140
Do you ever feel like you don't have enough time to complete everything?	69	49	71	51	140
Is it easy for you to "ask for help" when you need help?	98	71	41	29	139
Is English your second language?	27	19	115	81	142
Do you need any other special learning services and/or support to be successful in your classes?	30	22	105	78	135

Table 3 illustrates how students rate their reading, writing, math, verbal, and computer skills. Respondents were more likely to rate their skill level as good or excellent in the following areas: verbal (78%), computer (75%), reading (74%), and writing (65%). The area most often rated as fair or poor was math (56%).

Table 3 How would you rate your skills in the following areas?		
Reading	N	%
Poor	3	2
Fair	31	24
Good	54	42
Excellent	42	32
Total	130	100
Writing	N	%
Poor	8	6
Fair	40	29
Good	74	55
Excellent	14	10
Total	136	100
Math	N	%
Poor	24	17
Fair	53	39
Good	49	35
Excellent	13	9
Total	139	100
Verbal	N	%
Poor	6	4
Fair	25	18
Good	65	47
Excellent	43	31
Total	139	100
Computer	N	%
Poor	5	4
Fair	29	21
Good	64	46
Excellent	40	29
Total	142	100

Table 4 captures background factors and life experiences of students enrolled in learning communities. Respondents indicated that they were more likely to be full-time students (83%) and work less than 20 hours per week (67%). While the majority of respondents were familiar with financial aid (91%), approximately half of the students denoted that they would like help purchasing books (51%); however, students were less likely to need transportation (20%) or daycare (4%) support. Overall, students understand the expectations of being a college student (97%), understand how the college system works (95%), and feel comfortable with their peers (91%).

Table 4 Background Factors and Life Experiences	Yes		No		Total
	N	%	N	%	
Are you a full-time student (12 units or more)?	116	83	23	17	139
Do you work more than 20 hours per week?	46	33	95	67	141
Do you know about financial aid?	129	91	13	9	142
Do you need help with books?	73	51	69	49	142
Do you need help with transportation?	28	20	113	80	141
Does your family situation conflict with your studies?	26	18	115	82	141
Do you need help with daycare for children?	5	4	135	96	140
Are you comfortable with other college students (Do you “fit in”)?	127	91	12	9	139
Do you understand the expectations of being a college student?	137	97	4	3	141
Do you understand how the “college system” works?	132	95	7	5	139