

Crafton Hills College - Outcomes Assessment Report

Course: CHC-090x4 College Study Skills and Strategies

Term: 2012 Spring

1. Learning Outcomes Statement

1. Develop and demonstrate effective skills, habits and attitudes that lead to student success.
2. Utilize effective study strategies, including reading, note-taking, organizing/rehearsing information, and test-taking skills.
3. Develop an understanding of one's own learning style/preferences, and utilize strategies that maximize one's own learning strengths.
4. Communicate effectively and make group decisions within relationships of diverse individuals.

2. Means of Assessment (Measurement Method)

1. Construction of a learning portfolio that details strategies and choices that lead to becoming a more effective and successful student (SLOs 1, 2,3)
2. Interactive in-class team-based activities that involve collaboration with peers. (SLOs 1,4)

3. Criteria for Success (Benchmark)

No Benchmark Identified

4. Summary of Evidence

This class was offered as part of the "Telling Our Stories" learning community, in combination with READ 925, READ 956 and ENGL914. The Learning Community was a pilot of the "Compressed" course approach that ran 2 of the courses concurrently for 8 weeks apiece. CHC 090 ran for 8 weeks, meeting M-TH for 1 hour each day. The goal of this structure was aimed at accelerating the time that students starting at the lowest levels of English/Reading can reach English 015 in a single semester. These details are important because they set the context for which students were expected to learn and grasp key learning and study strategies that would serve them in subsequent college-level coursework.

Looking at the results, of the 25 students enrolled in the course, just over 1/3 of the students met the overall learning expectations for the course. They demonstrated the required

commitment, work habits and attitudes that will enable them to succeed in a college setting, across disciplines. The remaining 2/3rds of students showed, to varying degrees, a low level of motivation, a lack of commitment to fully engaging in the class, and doing consistent work out of class -- putting it simply, over half of the students did not do the required reading on a consistent basis. Several students relied on their own prior experience, their recollection of class discussion (many did not take notes, even when asked to), and guessing on tests. While most students could describe some key strategies taught in the course when asked, only about 1/3 of the class put these strategies into practice, and those were the students who succeeded. For some students, it appeared that the sheer volume of information covered in the 8-week format was close to overwhelming. The class periods were short to the point where only limited time could be spent practicing in-class, and the daily pace of the class didn't offer the time to digest topics between classes that a full-semester class would have allowed.

5. Use of Results (Implications for Program Improvement & Planning)

While this course is a vital one for under-prepared students to take early in their college experience, it is my view that offering this course in the compressed, 8-week format poses some significant, if not overwhelming challenges for these particular students. With an accelerated format, there is an expectation that students will be able to pick up concepts quickly, and put them into practice. This is not a realistic expectation for low-functioning students. While I made adjustments to the course to slow the pace somewhat, and to balance "soft" concepts -- responsibility, self-management, interdependence, with the "hard" skills of note-taking, rehearsing and test-prep strategies. I believe that students needed more time to grasp concepts than the 8-week, daily format afforded. The students that succeeded were the ones that already possessed a high degree of commitment, and employed sound strategies already.

My recommendations to improve student performance are the following:

1. Offer CHC 090 as a full-semester course. These students need time to grasp key concepts and practice using the skills taught in the course.
2. If the course is to continue being offered in a compressed format, then the content should be reduced to a smaller number of concepts and strategies, and more time devoted to mastery of those concepts. I would highly recommend a summer bridge-preparatory experience be offered prior to offering the compressed format in the fall.
3. The course should combine the "hard" and "soft" skills -- the common theme for low student performance in this class can be attributed to low student expectations and motivation, as well as a self-defeating outlook, where students often gave up when challenged, and resigned themselves to failure.