

Spring 2015 Title V HSI Grant Learning Community Evaluations

Prepared by Diana Pineda

Purpose of Brief

This brief illustrates the results of the Spring 2015 Title V HSI Grant Learning Community evaluations, completed by 29 respondents.

Summary of Findings

- 97% of respondents **Strongly Agreed** or **Agreed** being in a Learning Community helped them to feel comfortable asking questions and making contributions in class discussions.
- 93% **Strongly Agreed** or **Agreed** with the following statements:
 - I would recommend joining a Learning Community to other students.
 - Participating in a Learning Community helped me develop connections with other students.
- Respondents loosely defined a LC as two courses whose curriculum is linked together to improve student learning.
- A common topic among comments was positive statements regarding building relationships with other students and faculty.
- Respondents indicated they would change communication between students and faculty in their LC, Blackboard was specifically suggested as a possible solution.

Overview

Learning Communities (LCs) at Crafton Hills College (CHC) consist of student cohorts who take two or more courses together during the same semester; to provide a more in depth understanding of course subject matter while they build relationships with faculty and learn together outside the classroom. Research has indicated that students who participate in LCs earn higher GPAs, have lower dropout rates, have greater success in other courses, finish college sooner, develop lasting connections with student and faculty, and are more satisfied with college.^{1,2} Expansion of LCs at CHC was part of the Title V Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) Grant. In an effort to continuously improve student success, students provided evaluations in the following LCs offered under the Title V HSI Grant in the 2014-2015 academic year:

- ENGL-976, READ-980, AND CHC-090
- ENGL-102, PSYCH-100

Table I illustrates the response rate for each section. The overall response rate of the LC evaluation survey was 31%.

Table I. Response rate for STEM LC evaluation surveys

Learning Community	#	N	%
ENGL-976, READ-980, AND CHC-090	21	57	36.8
ENGL-102, PSYCH-100	8	38	21.1
Total	29	95	30.5

Note: '#' is the number of responses, 'N' is the number of students earning a grade on record (GOR³) in the section, and '%' is the number of responses divided by the total number of students earning a GOR in the section.

Methodology

In conjunction with the Learning Communities Strategies Coordinator, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, Research, and Planning developed a one-page paper survey to measure students' perceptions of the LC program. The evaluations were distributed in the final week of the courses. Respondents were asked to identify the LC in which they participated. Respondents were then presented with a series of Likert-scale questions to measure their level of agreement with statements regarding various program components. The following 5-point Likert scale was utilized: 5=Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Disagree, 2=Strongly Disagree, and 1= Not Applicable.

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.

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

³ GOR is a grade earned in the course of A, B, C, D, F, P, NP, CR, NC or I

Lastly, respondents were presented with four open-ended questions. The last four questions asked respondents to define what a Learning Community is, provided an opportunity for respondents to share comments on their participation in a LC, and to provide suggestions on any changes to the LC.

Findings

Table 2 (on page 3) demonstrates respondents' level of agreement with statements regarding various LC program components. Ninety- seven percent of respondents "Strongly Agreed" or "Agreed" being in a Learning Community helped them to feel comfortable asking questions and making contributions in class discussions. The majority of respondents (93%) "Strongly Agreed" or "Agreed" with the following statements:

- I would recommend joining a Learning Community to other students.
- Participating in a Learning Community helped me develop connections with other students.

Ninety percent of respondents "Strongly Agreed" or "Agreed" they were satisfied with their Learning Community experience. Additionally, 83% of respondents "Strongly Agreed" or "Agreed" with the following statements:

- Participating in a Learning Community helped me develop connections with faculty and staff.
- I worked with other students in my Learning Community outside of class.

Table 2. Respondents' level of agreement with statements regarding various LC program components.

Statement	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Not Applicable		Total
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
I am satisfied with my Learning Community experience	5	17.2	21	72.4	3	10.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	29
I would recommend joining a Learning Community to other students	12	41.4	15	51.7	2	6.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	29
Participating in a Learning Community helped me develop connections with faculty and staff	11	37.9	13	44.8	5	17.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	29
Participating in a Learning Community helped me develop connections with other students	14	48.3	13	44.8	2	6.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	29
Being part of a Learning Community made me feel more supported in my coursework	12	41.4	13	44.8	2	6.9	1	3.4	1	3.4	29
Being part of a Learning Community made me feel more supported in my choice to go to college	8	28.6	13	46.4	6	21.4	0	0.0	1	3.6	28
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).	11	37.9	10	34.5	7	24.1	0	0.0	1	3.4	29
Being in a Learning Community helped me to feel comfortable asking questions and making contributions in class discussions	12	42.9	15	53.6	1	3.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	28
The instructors in my Learning Community planned assignments together	2	7.1	14	50.0	5	17.9	5	17.9	2	7.1	28
I worked with other students in my Learning Community outside of class	8	27.6	16	55.2	2	6.9	0	0.0	3	10.3	29

Note: Any missing responses were not included in this table.

Below are responses provided to the open-ended questions of the evaluation. To anonymize responses, individual names mentioned in the comments and/or suggestions were replaced with “[Name]”. Respondents loosely defined a LC as two courses whose curriculum is linked together to improve student learning. A common topic among comments was positive statements regarding building relationships with other students and faculty. Respondents indicated they would change communication between students and faculty in their LC, Blackboard was specifically suggested as a possible solution.

7: What is a Learning Community?

- 2 classes connected with a topic that is supported in both classes.
- 2 joined classes with the same students attending those classes.
- A class that meets more than once a day, same students.
- A community of students who come together to learn in a new way other than the normal way of single classes.
- A group where one can learn and help e/o.
- A learning community is two or more classes combined into one.
- A linked class that plans a few assignments / projects together & has some sort of a connection between the two.
- A place to have a similar goal in mind, working and getting closer to other students.
- Connected courses.
- Consecutive classes that review similar material.
- Is when any student that needs help can get as much as the people working in Learning Community can give.
- It makes people more comfortable to do work and ask help.
- Learning communities incorporate two courses with a major topic that connected the classes and helps to get students more on a personal level.
- The learning community is a community of student and teachers trying to reach a similar goal... Helping students become more confident in themselves and their ability to understand hard work.
- To help students study.
- Two (maybe more) classes linked together to help support or expand the classes they are linked with. Honestly, I don't know the "exact" definition.
- Two classes combined, trying to connect activities together.
- Two classes connected by a theme.
- Two classes in one. It's required that students take READ-980/ENGL-976 together. Learning community is a mandatory for my classes.
- Two classes joined together with assignments that relate to each other.
- Two classes joining together to cover how a topic, like media, can be examined in each subject.
- Two classes that are linked together and helps us to be more comfortable in our classroom.
- Two classes that share a theme that class is based on.
- Two classes with certain similarities that teach topics that go with one another.
- Two courses synced designed to enhance the learning experience among students.
- Two different classes linked together with a common theme.
- Two jointed classes.
- Where one class has two different curriculums but are connected.

8: What did you like best about participating in a Learning Community?

- Ask questions and they always help me.
- Being able to interact with peers, and learning from teachers/tutors who are older and wiser.
- Creating connections with my teachers and classmates.
- Getting close to other students and being able to work with them.
- Getting to know the students, makes the class more memorable.
- I enjoyed how the classes connected at certain points and we were able to have various classroom discussions.
- I feel more comfortable working with colleagues.
- I like how you can gain more advice & support from peers.
- I liked when we connected PSYCH to English, but the connection was lost in the end.
- It allowed me to learn in an interactive environment. People gave their input feeling comfortable. I liked the link between some projects, concepts, etc.
- It is fun and learn new things.
- It made classes amusing to be in. There was also a lot more interaction than in other classes. I don't know, it was just fun.
- It was a nice environment to be around that benefited me.
- More interactions with other students.
- My interactions with other students just like me. In the way they helped be a better English writer!
- Not having to run around campus to get to a class.
- The best part was the connection I was able to make with the students and professors.
- The community feel and the topic that unites two unrelated subjects.
- The concepts in both English & PSYCH that involved media.
- The connections and friendships I made with the people and an awesome English 102 teacher.
- The fact that the classes are synced and you know everyone in the class. It's more communal and by the end of the semester, you feel like family.
- The feeling that everyone in the class was in a way working together, even when working separately.
- The same classroom and classmates.
- The two classes had excellent communication with one another.
- What I enjoyed best was building relationships with other students.
- What I liked best is that we had on instructor which made it easier than having a separate instructor for English and Reading. This made my first semester at college, a great experience.
- Working one on one with my teachers.
- Working with other students.
- You make a connection with other students.

9. What would you change about this Learning Community?

- Assignments timed better. Focusing on things for individual course, OH and end of chapter relate to community theme.
- Being in the same room as both teachers at the same time.
- Definitely more correlation between the two classes. I know the classes were linked, but it didn't feel like the two were moving along together.
- Different teaching styles, maybe.
- For schedules to be in sync.
- I would change the time length of the classes.
- I would keep the end final paper a joint paper. Also I would make a list of connection ideas from each chapter.
- I would like to incorporate more projects or assignments that have to do with both classes. Also, I would have the professors coordinate more with the scheduling of assignments.
- If there is going to be a connection between the classes, make that happen. If one teacher is very detailed and helpful the other has to be, or I'd just take a regular course class.
- In need of a strategy where the students won't feel overwhelmed.
- Maybe add more connecting assignments.
- Maybe some of the schedule.
- More communication between teachers to plan assignments that reflect off each other.
- More cooperation between instructors, planning assignments together, possibly.
- More easy to make an appointment.
- No
- Not one thing because I find the whole process useful.
- Professor Cannon did a great job this semester. On the other hand, Professor [Name] needs to work on the structure of his class. Maybe more in class work, book references, etc.
- PSYCH projects could be announced/assigned earlier in the year + grading could be clearer + easier to keep track of.
- Teachers adjusted for the issue, but two major papers and a video project at once was a little overwhelming.
- The length of classes, make the assignment relate to each other so that it feels like one class instead of 2.
- There is nothing I would change.
- Timing with my classes. Making sure I am in sync with what I am learning in class.
- To me it seems perfectly fine, no changes I can add.
- Try to make the schedule more similar in ways that a learning community is supposed to be. That's pretty much it.
- Work out the PSYCH schedule so that the students don't get overwhelmed with the coursework towards the end.
- Working together and incorporating ideas from one class into the other and having similar if not the same assignments.

10. If you have any other comments you want to share, please write them here.

- A lot of stress occurred from all the work assigned but it definitely helped!
- For PSYCH, I would have liked to have a place like Blackboard to understand the structure of the class.
- I enjoyed the experience of the LC. Thank you :) Use blackboard.
- I enjoyed this class, overall.
- I think instructors need to communicate with each other more. Also, it would help to have both instructors to use Blackboard & make their own power points & keep students updated on grades.
- I think the PSYCH portion could have been more organized and structured / Maybe it just need to be longer because it seemed rushed.
- I think there needs to be more structure with the psychology assignments. Psychology is my major and I didn't really take a lot away from that class :(
- If there was a day or two when we as the students were able to have access to both teachers where we could ask any questions or receive any help we need and it also would allow the teachers to be on the same page when it comes to the media aspect.
- It was great. Thank you Lauren, Brittany, Johnathan for all your help.
- Maybe spreading out the assignments given so that there aren't multiple assignments due at the same time. I do realize that in college, professors will assign work without having to consult with other professors, or student's workloads, but I think there would be more thought and effort placed in the assignments if it was spread out.
- More collaboration between teachers.
- PSYCH- a Blackboard page in order to keep track of points and assignments.
- Seriously, plan the course better and the power points/packets aren't very helpful. Try the reverse classroom technique.
- Sometimes it feels like English is easy + PSYCH is hard, resulting in added pressure.
- Teachers worked well together and I enjoyed the two classes :)
- Teachers, you guys were very good to talk to about work in class. Oh! [Name] you should give out The Viral Project at the beginning of the semester.
- Thank you for all your time and effort for teaching.
- Thank you for being such wonderful teachers and trying your hardest to make this community great for us.
- Try to not squeeze all the "harder" assignments towards the end & perhaps spread them out.
- Utilize Blackboard & please keep us updated on grades! *Communicate with students about due dates. If you assign something, talk about it more than once. * Use study guides + handouts. We learn so much better with something tangible.