



COLLEGE

SAN JOAQUIN DELTA

OFFICE OF PLANNING, RESEARCH AND INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

DATA PROFILE: Summary of First-Year Learning Communities-Fall 2008

REQUESTING PARTY: Dan Baker

DATA TYPE: Pre and Post Small Learning Community Surveys and data retrieval from System 2000 test database.

OVERVIEW

In fall 2008, six learning communities were promoted as a 'First-Year Experience' program that grouped three courses together (2 general education courses and 1 guidance course) according to student assessment levels (see Table 1 for List of Learning Communities).

Table 1. *First-Year Experience Learning Communities (Fall 2008)*

LEVEL:GROUP	COURSES
1:1 Total Enrolled	20 ENG 70 READING 91A GUID 5
1:2 Total Enrolled	29 ENG 70 GUID 5 READING 98
1:3 Total Enrolled	15 ENG 87 READING 91E GUID 19
2:1 Total Enrolled	24 MATH 80 GUID 5 ENG 79
2:2 Total Enrolled	24 ENG 79 HIST 30A GUID 5
3:1 Total Enrolled	21 ENG 1A COM ST 1A LIBRY 1

Note. Total enrollments based on number of students in the GUID or LIBRY courses in each group at the end of fall 2008.

In order to assess the effectiveness of these learning communities, pre and post surveys were administered to the students in each of the learning community groups to measure their perceptions of the campus climate and academic self-efficacy levels. The purpose of the survey was to determine if learning community students exhibited more positive attitudes about the college and self-efficacy after their experiences in a learning community.

METHOD

A total of 166 surveys were administered and collected at the start of the term, with only 98 surveys matched at the end of the term for the entire First-Year Experience learning communities (see Appendix for Survey Copy).

Campus Climate Measure. Fourteen items were used to measure students' perceptions of the campus climate (e.g. "My teachers care about me"). These items were scaled from 1 = *Never* to 7 = *always* with more positive campus climate perceptions corresponding to higher scores.

Perceptions of Academic Self-Efficacy. Twenty-two items were used to measure students' perceptions of academic self-efficacy (e.g. "How well can you complete writing assignments for school?"). These items were scaled from 1 = *Not at all well* to 7 = *very well*. High levels of perceived academic self-efficacy are associated with higher scores.

Student Demographics. Of the 166 students who completed the pre-survey, 59.9 percent were female, 37.3 percent identified themselves as Hispanic, 57.5 percent were first-time students (completing 0 units), 52.5 percent did not work, and 79 percent did not have dependents.

Missing Data Analysis. Before analyzing the data for differences in perceptions of campus climate and academic self-efficacy, tests were run to check for differences between students who completed a post-survey and students who did not based on their pre-experience responses. Results revealed no statistically significant differences between the students in terms of pre-climate perception, academic self-efficacy perceptions, gender, ethnic group, units completed, and hours worked per week. There was however, a statistically significant relationship between pre and post survey completion and the number of dependents. Students who had dependents were less likely to complete a post-survey than students who had no dependents, $\chi^2 (2) = 10.03, p = .001$, Cramer's $V = .25$.

RESULTS

Of particular interest to evaluation of the learning communities were the pre and post campus climate and academic self-efficacy perceptions and the overall success rates of the learning communities.

Reported Campus Climate and Academic Self-Efficacy Perceptions. Two analyses were done to determine whether the learning community experience affected perceptions of the campus climate and academic self-efficacy. Results revealed no statistically significant differences in perceptions of academic self-efficacy before and after the learning community experience. Results did reveal statistically significant differences in perceptions of the campus climate. Positive campus climate perceptions increased after the learning community experience, $t (84) = 4.74, p < .001$. Students reported significantly more positive campus climate perceptions after the learning community experience than they did before the experience ($r = .42, p < .001$).

Reasons for Learning Community Enrollment. Items were added to the post-survey in order to identify the reasons why students enrolled in the learning communities. Ten general reasons for enrolling in the learning communities were presented to students with instructions to check all that apply (see Table 2). Of all the possible reasons why students enrolled in the learning communities, “personal choice” appeared to be leading factor for enrollment (35.7%). Another factor that seemed to be related to students’ enrollments in the learning community was counselor recommendations (27.6%) and accidental registrations into the learning communities (Explanation for “Other”). In addition to these reasons, many students also indicated that they were interested in the combination of classes, suggesting good pairing of the learning community courses.

Table 2. *Reasons for Enrolling in Learning Community (N = 98)*

Reason	Percentage
Personal choice	35.70%
Counselor recommendation	27.60%
Pre-requisites	22.40%
Interested in the combination of classes	21.40%
Other	21.40%
Easier to register for classes this way	13.30%
Friend's recommendation	7.10%
Could not get first choice of classes	6.10%
Easier to get units I needed	6.10%
Required for Major	3.10%

Overall Impressions of Learning Community. The post survey also contained five items measuring students’ overall impressions of the learning community. These five items were anchored from 1= *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree* and were designed to get an aggregated total score ranging from 5 (Very Negative Impressions) to 35 (Very Positive Impressions). However, due to formatting issues that were not caught before the administration of the survey, only 16 surveys had complete scores. Using data from the 16 completed surveys, the average score was 27.3, suggesting that the learning communities left a pretty good impression with the students. Examination of individual questions revealed that on average, most students would participate in another learning community and would recommend their learning community to other students.

Table 3. *Student Impressions of Learning Community*

Item	Total	Mean
I would participate in another learning community.	17	5.88
I would recommend this learning community to other students.	15	6.27
The learning community prepared me to be successful in my future classes.	17	5.76
My learning community instructors worked well together.	16	5.81
My instructors did a good job combining their assignments.	17	5.71

Student Comments about the Learning Communities. Three questions were appended at the end of the post-survey for students to leave comments on: *In your opinion, what could be done to improve the learning community?*, *What did you enjoy most about the learning community?*, and *Any other comments?* In general, students wrote extremely positive comments with concurrence among most students that the learning communities were great and that the reading and English classes really helped them improve their skills:

“I believe the learning community is doing a great job. I’ve seen myself and other students in my class grow. I really think the learning community is on the right track and all they need to do is keep up the good work.”

However, some of the recurring responses for the first question were that teachers needed to interact more and align their coursework better and that more group work was needed:

“I think the classes could’ve been more together. Like talking about the same kind of things at the same time.”

“They could have the teachers communicate more about their students.”

When asked what students enjoyed most about the learning communities, comments were punctuated with words such as *connectedness* and *bonding*; displaying the importance they put on getting to know their classmates and making new friends:

“Togetherness, and communication of everyone in classes to come together.”

“I enjoy the close-knit atmosphere of being in a learning community. Teachers are really considerate of us and can help us a lot more since they can discuss our status with the other teacher in the community.”

As these comments suggest, most students held great value to the feelings of collectivism the learning communities induced in them. Therefore, it appears that this aspect of the learning community: the same students taking the same classes, is one of the strongest factors promoting social engagement and may be why campus climate perceptions significantly increased after the learning community experience.

APPENDIX: POST SURVEY COPY

Please fill in the responses that best describe how you feel or think about the statements listed below AS A RESULT OF THE LEARNING COMMUNITY.

	1 Never	2 Rarely	3 Less often	4 Some of the time	5 More often	6 Most of the time	7 Always
How often can you say...							
1. My teachers care about me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. My classmates are approachable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. People at Delta College care about me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. I feel welcomed at Delta College	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. I know my classmates	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. I enjoy being a student at Delta College	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. My teachers are approachable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. I feel comfortable asking other students for help	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. I feel a sense of belonging at Delta College	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. My teachers know me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. I feel comfortable asking my teachers for help	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. I like to study with other students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. I have made friends at Delta College	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. My teachers treat students fairly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

As a result of the learning community, how well can you...	1 Not well at all	2	3 Not too well	4	5 Pretty well	6	7 Very well
1. complete writing assignments for school?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. get help with your schoolwork when you need it?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. use the internet to get information for class assignments?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. participate in class discussions?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. learn math concepts?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. keep up with your schoolwork?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. pass your courses with a B or better?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. finish your homework assignments by the deadline?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. learn reading skills?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. concentrate on your schoolwork?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. solve word problems in your math class?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. work with classmates to complete assignments?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. take class notes?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. comprehend material that you read for class?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. recall information presented in class?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16. learn writing skills?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
17. motivate yourself to do schoolwork?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18. learn English grammar?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
19. recall information you read for class?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
20. arrange a place to study without distractions?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
21. organize your schoolwork?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
22. talk to your teacher about your schoolwork?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Additional Comments:

1. In your opinion, what could be done to improve the learning community?

2. What did you enjoy most about the learning community?

3. Any other comments:
