

Learning Communities Report

Recommendations Based on LC Research Conducted  
By

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Institutional Effectiveness

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The following recommendations are based on the numerous research reports conducted by the SJDC Office of Planning, Research, and Institutional Effectiveness.

1. TEACHER TO SAME TEACHER SUCCESS RATES:

After reviewing the most recent data on teacher to same teacher comparison here are a few items I noticed and recommendations based on this information. First it is important to note that 66% of the LC's classes had either higher retention and/or persistence percentages compared to the instructors non LC classes. While not always a statistically significant difference there does seem to be a general tend for greater success in the LC classes.

In two of the classes that were not as successful both experienced a mid semester switch in teachers. It is difficult to say how much this affected the classes but antidotal evidence and student focus groups indicated that it had a strong adverse effect. If these two classes are not considered in the analysis the LC classes have higher retention and/or persistence percentage rates in 75% of the classes.

RECOMMENDATION: If a LC instructor is replaced for any reason additional support should be made available. The new LC group should meet regularly after the first weeks of the switch to discuss students, integrated assignments, pedagogies and classroom management philosophies.

2. AFFIRM HISTORY SUCCESS RATES:

One of the most significant findings is that for the AFFIRM LC history classes, the ONLY class that showed higher passing and retention percentage rates was the Spring 2008 class where students were not embedded in a larger history class.

RECOMMENDATION: The AFFIRM program English students should not be embedded in a larger history class but be connected to their own section of history.

Spring 2008 (two section #'s for the same class)

<b>History 30B Sections 31942, 92271 (Both Learning Community) and 76074 (Comparison)</b>						
	Passed		Retained		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Comparison Section Students	84	70.6%	85	71.4%	119	85.6%
<b>Learning Community Students</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>85.0%</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>85.0%</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>14.4%</b>
<i>Total</i>	101	72.7%	102	73.4%	139	100.0%

Fall 2008

<b>History 30A Sections 27021 (Learning Community) and 74670 (Comparison)</b>						
	Passed		Retained		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Comparison Section Students	38	73.1%	41	78.8%	52	63.4%
Learning Community Students	21	70.0%	21	70.0%	30	36.6%
<i>Total</i>	59	72.0%	62	75.6%	82	100.0%

Spring 2009

<b>History 30A Sections 55214 (Learning Community) and 32818 (Comparison)</b>						
	Passed		Retained		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Comparison Section Students	96	67.6%	100	70.4%	142	81.6%
Learning Community Students	20	62.5%	22	68.8%	32	18.4%
<i>Total</i>	116	66.7%	122	70.1%	174	100.0%

<b>History 30B Sections 87062 (Learning Community), 74565 and 59616 (Both Comparison)</b>						
	Passed		Retained		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Comparison Section Students	214	66.3%	249	77.1%	323	92.0%
Learning Community Students	19	67.9%	20	71.4%	28	8.0%

### 3. LC STUDENT AWARENESS:

When students attended their first class some reported that they were surprised to be in a Learning Community. A button has been added to the online schedule directing students to the LC web site explaining what LC's are and showing the connected classes.

RECOMMENDATION: Increase the visibility of Learning Communities.

Add TV announcements on all screens around campus.

Develop LC brochure.

Have a booth on quad to distribute LC information to students.

Create LC specific flyers (e.g. AFFIRM, AJ, Psyc)

-Post on billboards around campus, distribute to faculty and staff.

Continue campus announcements about LC's

Conduct classroom presentations.

Advertise in college newspaper.

Add LC information to roadside marquee.

Determine if on-line schedule can have LC description or connections listed under each class.

#### 4. INTEGRATED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES.

Student focus groups show that students want more linked activities. Some LC's have numerous activities while others have very few. Research from other campuses indicates students are more successful when there are many integrated activities.

RECOMMENDATION: Integrated activities from Delta and other colleges LC's should be shared with all instructors. Specific training on developing integrating assignments should be developed. The LC coordinator should meet with each LC group to discuss integrated assignments. Training at the New Faculty Academy should be considered; this could be training on how to create a LC and integrate assignments (90 min) and would also assist in recruiting new faculty to participate in LC's.

#### 5. ACADEMIC SELF-EFFICACY SCORES.

Scores did not differ from beginning semester surveys and end of semester surveys. We are not sure if no improvement occurred or if students discovered that they over estimated their skills at the beginning of the term.

RECOMMENDATION: Add retrospective questions to end of semester survey. If no improvement occurred based on these new questions then develop plan to improve scores.

#### 6. RESEARCH LIMITATIONS:

No control groups are currently in place to compare academic self-efficacy scores from LC students to general classes.

RECOMMENDATION: As many control groups will be established as possible. Faculty teaching a LC course and the same course in non LC format will have all their students complete the LC surveys (some modifications of instructions will be required.) For classes embedded in larger classes the larger class will have all students complete the LC surveys.

#### 7. FACULTY FOCUS GROUPS:

Faculty focus groups indicated that faculty want to meet more often with other LC faculty, want more training on linking assignments, want training on how to manage student classroom behavior, want more advertising of LC so that they are more highly regarded, want earlier training so they have more time to provide time for collaborating,

RECOMMENDATION: Monthly brown bag lunches are recommended. Additional trainings for faculty need to be conducted and also made accessible via web to accommodate those who cannot attend. A brown bag lunch meeting is scheduled in November. Faculty will receive information on integrating activities and will have the opportunity to share "best practices."

Although not discovered in the research the following recommendations are made based on observations, and LC committee meetings.

1. Classes within LC's need to be closely linked by time. For example, an LC should not have a morning class and a afternoon class attached. The most conducive schedule would be for classes to follow one after the other.
2. Currently there is a wide range of "Learning Communities" on campus. To qualify as a true learning community the college should specifically define what makes up a learning community. Minimum components should be:
  - a. All of the same students are enrolled together or a small class is embedded in a larger class. (Two or more small English classes could be embedded in a larger history class.)
  - b. Faculty meet and create integrated assignments and discuss student progress. Faculty should strive to fully incorporate their syllabi.
- 3.