

2009

# Learning Community Program Assessment Report



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

San Joaquin Delta College launched its restructured, Title V-funded learning community program in fall 2007. The short-term goals of the program are to increase student engagement, increase awareness of resources and support student success, and the long-term goal of the program is to help students persist and graduate or transfer to a four-year university. During the past two years, regular studies of the program's impact in terms of student success, perceptions of the campus climate and academic self-efficacy have been conducted; however, no studies have focused on the program's process and implementation. The aims of the present study were to explore the short-term impact of the Title V learning communities program, to assess faculty and student perceptions of the program, to identify any barriers to program implementation and to gather faculty and student recommendations for program improvement.

In order to determine if the program was (1) being implemented as intended, and (2) achieving its goals, three studies were conducted: a study of student success in learning community courses, a pre/post survey of student climate perception and academic self-efficacy, and a qualitative study of faculty and student perceptions of the program overall and specifically its implementation, process and practice. In spring 2009, the College offered five assessment level-based learning communities and three special program-based learning communities.

To determine if learning community students were similar to the overall student population, all students enrolled in a learning community were compared on a number of demographic and academic characteristics to the overall population of students in the spring 2009 semester.

- Learning community students were more likely to be African American and less likely to be white or Asian than the overall student population.
- Learning community students had lower semester and cumulative GPAs in the spring 2009 semester.
- On average, learning community students were enrolled in a greater number of units than non-learning community students.
- Learning community and non-learning community students did not differ in terms of registration dates for their courses.

To determine if learning community students were more likely to succeed than students who were not enrolled in learning communities, students in learning community courses were compared to a matched sample of students in non-learning community sections of the same course.

- Learning community students were slightly more likely to succeed in Library Skills 1 (Library Information Literacy), Reading 98 (Individualized Reading Skills) and Guidance 32 (Career Information Interview), but learning community student success rates were not significantly higher for any course. In every other class, learning community students were either equally or less likely to succeed than non-learning community students.
- In terms of retention, learning community students were retained at a higher rate than non-learning community students in History 30A and Math 80, but the rate was significantly higher only in History 30A. In other courses, learning community students were retained at an equal or lower rate than non-learning community students.

## LEARNING COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT REPORT (JUNE 2009)

- When previous academic performance is taken into account, these findings are not surprising. Learning community students had consistently lower cumulative GPAs than non-learning community students coming into the spring 2009 semester. One exception to this finding was evident in the transfer-level courses: these learning community students were similar to their non-learning community peers in terms of previous academic performance.

The results of the other studies (student surveys and student and faculty interviews) shed some additional light on the findings of the course outcome analysis. Student pre-test and post-test surveys revealed significantly more positive perceptions of the campus climate after participating in a learning community; student academic self-efficacy, however, did not change from pre-test to post-test. The results of students' open-ended survey responses and focus groups revealed many similar themes. Overall, students rated their experiences in learning communities rather highly; however, student reactions to different learning community structures and implementations varied greatly from community to community.

- Several students did not purposefully enroll in a learning community. Many students said they registered for one required course, such as an English class, and were surprised to automatically be enrolled in two other courses.
- Many students had positive perceptions of their faculty members and commended their faculty for their great efforts to help students succeed.
- The majority of students were pleased with the integrated assignments in their classes and said these assignments improved their learning experiences. Although academic self-efficacy scores did not change from baseline to follow-up, many students believed linked assignments and collaborative learning activities improved their overall learning and, in some cases, personal development. There was a consensus among students in most learning communities that they would like to see even more linked assignments in the future.
- Students had generally positive perceptions of the College. From baseline to follow-up, student survey responses indicated students had significantly more favorable perceptions of the College after participating in a learning community. Student interviews revealed similar sentiments: the majority of students believed the College provided all the resources and support students need to succeed, and a number of students said they believed faculty at the College truly cared about their personal and academic success.
- Above all, student interviews and surveys revealed that students believed their experience in the learning communities helped them make friends and build a support system. Some students said they enjoyed the collegial atmosphere in their learning community courses, and other students said they felt more comfortable speaking up and asking questions in their learning community courses.
- In terms of areas for improvement, students suggested increasing awareness of what learning communities are and how they benefit students. Some students recommended including a description of a learning community and participation and attendance requirements in the online course registration system. Several students also emphasized the importance of faculty teaching style and communication to the program's success: many said that more open communication between faculty members and between students and faculty would improve the program for the future.

Faculty member interviews and focus groups revealed some similar themes, but learning community faculty provided an additional perspective on their students' behaviors and skill levels, as well as the challenges faculty face in the classroom and the in working closely with other faculty.

- Faculty members were generally satisfied with the training they received prior to teaching in a learning community. Not all faculty members interviewed were able to attend pre-semester

training sessions, but nearly every faculty member said the most valuable training they received was actually from experience and from working closely with their peers.

- There was considerable consensus among faculty members that they needed more opportunities to meet and converse with other learning community instructors. Some faculty members recommended regular lunch meetings for learning community instructors, and other faculty members suggested a faculty lounge or meeting area just for learning community instructors.

- Faculty members' perceptions of linked assignments and integrated curricula were mixed. Some faculty members said they integrated several major assignments and planned to integrate even more assignments, activities and curricula in the future. Other faculty said they did not have time to integrate more than one assignment due to the volume of course material they covered in their courses. A few faculty members said they would like to have additional training on linking curricula and assignments between courses.
- Learning community faculty tended to believe that their learning community students were at lower skill levels than other students; there was also a predominant belief among faculty that learning community students were late to register for courses and were less prepared for college in general. Although some faculty said their learning community students were more motivated than their non-learning community students, the majority of faculty members believed their learning community students faced more personal and academic challenges than other students.
- Although faculty members said they would like the learning community experience to improve student performance, they expected their learning community students to have retention and success rates similar to those of their non-learning community students.
- Faculty members most commonly mentioned student support and group cohesion as a major benefit of learning communities. Across all faculty interviewed, student collegiality, friendship and peer learning were mentioned as the most significant strength of the learning community program. Some faculty said their students became such good friends that they even spent time outside of class together for social activities. Other faculty members said their learning community students provided more learning support to their peers in the classroom than did non-learning community students.
- In the pre-college level learning communities, faculty revealed a major caveat of learning community student engagement: student behavior can be difficult to manage in the classroom. Some faculty said they were quite surprised in their first semester to see that learning community students appeared unaware of in-class behavior expectations, and several faculty said they would like to see this issue addressed in the learning community training.
- From the faculty perspective, another notable benefit of learning communities is faculty engagement and teamwork. Although a couple of faculty members expressed disappointment with the dynamic of their faculty group, the majority of faculty said they greatly enjoyed working with their peers in a learning community. Most faculty said their faculty group communicated via phone or email on a regular basis, and some faculty members said they met in person once a month with their faculty group. In virtually every interview, faculty said they enjoyed learning from other faculty members and becoming familiar with courses in other disciplines.
- Faculty members were mixed about the idea of team teaching. Some faculty were supportive of the concept but were concerned about the implementation of such a program. Other faculty were opposed to team teaching because they believed it limited their academic freedom. In general, faculty believed teaching style and educational ideology should be considered when matching faculty for a collaborative teaching program.
- In terms of recommendations for the future, faculty members said they would like to see the program advertised more to both students and other faculty members. Many faculty said they would like to see the program become more highly regarded in both groups.

## LEARNING COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT REPORT (JUNE 2009)

In sum, students and faculty had generally positive perceptions of the learning community program. Students were particularly pleased with the social and engagement aspects of learning communities; faculty were also very satisfied with the increased engagement and cohesiveness they observed among their students. Students had more positive perceptions of the College after participating in a learning community, and many students were satisfied with the services and resources the College provides to help students succeed.

Although many students said they believed their learning community improved their learning experience, this did not equate to higher success rates or improved student academic self-efficacy in learning community courses. In general, learning community students were lower achievers prior to participating in a learning community, and in most courses learning community students were equally or less likely to succeed or be retained than non-learning community students.

Based on faculty and student interviews, there are a number of possible explanations for this finding. Many students who enroll in learning community courses are unaware of the requirements of learning community participation, and the learning community experience appears to vary widely from community to community. Some faculty integrated just one assignment, and others merely mentioned content from other courses in their learning community class. Still others said they integrated their major assignments and even attended each other's class sessions. This variation in learning community implementation, along with the lower achievement levels of learning community students, makes comparisons between learning community and non-learning community courses somewhat difficult.

It is apparent that, across all communities, the program helps students make friends and build a support system. This great sense of engagement and connectedness may result in a longer-term payoff: higher rates of term-to-term and year-to-year persistence. Faculty also appear to build relationships with other faculty during the learning community process. These two findings are consistent with the learning community model and show that, across different implementations of the program, community building is a major strength of the program.

There are areas in which the program may improve, and many suggestions for improvement come from the faculty and student interviews. Additional faculty training and increased efforts to match faculty based on teaching style or ideology may improve the planning and implementation process as well as the communication among faculty. In addition, efforts to increase faculty engagement, cohesion and peer learning, such as regular meetings or a learning community faculty lounge or training center, may improve faculty member teamwork and communication.

In addition, increased publicity of what learning communities are, how both faculty members and students benefit from the program and what expectations for program participation are may increase faculty awareness, support and participation. Further efforts should also be made to improve student awareness of the program, its benefits and requirements. In sum, although there are some areas in which the program may improve, the learning community program appears to be an effective means of increasing student engagement and building a sense of community among faculty and students alike.

## PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Title V grant at San Joaquin Delta College funds a number of different programs and services designed to build Delta College's capacity to serve historically underrepresented students. To that end, the grant provides funding for faculty to develop integrated curricula for sets of linked courses, or learning communities. Student learning communities are clusters of courses in which, ideally, the same students enroll in two or three courses and curricula is linked between classes with a particular theme or shared characteristic. Learning community courses are offered to students as an alternative to traditional courses.

At Delta College, learning communities allow students to take two or three courses with a similar theme and with the same classmates. Some course enrollments were linked prior to the College's award of the Title V grant, but the grant further documented and standardized the process by partially funding a learning community coordinator position, faculty professional development activities and faculty stipends for developing learning community curricula. Since Title V learning communities began in fall 2007, the number and variety of learning community courses has increased steadily each semester. In spring 2009, learning communities were offered to students in two special programs and to first-year students based on their initial assessment levels. The following courses were offered as learning communities based on student assessment levels:

### *Assessment Level 1 (Lowest Skill Levels)*

- Group 1
  - English 70 (Basic Writing Skills)
  - Reading 98 (Individualized Reading Skills)
  - Guidance 5 (Enhancing Self-Esteem, Cultural Awareness and College Success)
- Group 2
  - English 70 (Basic Writing Skills)
  - Guidance 5 (Enhancing Self-Esteem, Cultural Awareness and College Success)
  - Reading 91A (Reading in Literature)
- Group 3
  - Guidance 5 (Enhancing Self-Esteem, Cultural Awareness and College Success)
  - Math 73 (Applied Mathematics Laboratory)
  - Math 74 (Applied Mathematics)

### *Assessment Level 2*

- Group 1
  - Math 80 (Elementary Algebra)
  - Guidance 5 (Enhancing Self-Esteem, Cultural Awareness and College Success)
  - English 79 (Preparatory English)
- Group 2 (AFFIRM learning community)
  - English 79 (Preparatory English)
  - History 30A (African American History to 1877)
  - Guidance 5 (Enhancing Self-Esteem, Cultural Awareness and College Success)

### *Assessment Level 3 (Highest Skill Levels)*

- Group 1
  - English 1A (Written Communications)

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- Communication Studies 1A (Fundamentals of Speech)
- Library Skills 1 (Library Information Literacy)
- Group 2 (AFFIRM learning community)
  - English 1A (Written Communications)
  - History 30B (African American History Since 1877)
  - Guidance 20 (Transition to University Life)
- Group 3 (Puente learning community)
  - Guidance 32 (Career Information Interviewing)
  - English 1A (Written Communications)

In addition, the following courses were offered as learning communities for special programs or career tracks but were excluded from analysis in the current study:

- Teacher Preparation Pipeline
  - Learning Community 1
    - Art 4 (Exploring Art)
    - History 17A (History of the United States)
  - Learning Community 2
    - Math 2 (Calculus)
    - English 1B (Written Communications)

### GOALS OF THE STUDY

The long-term goals for all of the learning communities at the college, as with other Title V programs and services, are to support student success en route to degree attainment and transfer and to promote success among students from historically underrepresented groups. The purpose of the present study was to examine how learning community courses were being implemented; identify areas for improvement; and examine the impact of learning communities on student success, academic self-efficacy and perceptions of the College. Specifically, the present study sought to:

- Gather student and faculty perceptions of the learning community program
- Determine if learning communities were being carried out as intended
- Identify areas in which the program may improve
- Determine if students experience improved self-efficacy upon completion of the program
- To assess student perceptions of the campus climate
- Describe learning community students, both demographically and academically, and compare them to the overall College student population
- Determine if learning community students were more likely to pass their courses than other students
- Determine if learning community students were more likely to persist than other students

### ORGANIZATION OF FINDINGS

The current study included three different components: a quantitative analysis of course outcomes for each learning community, a student survey conducted at the start and end of the spring 2009 semester, and a qualitative (focus group/interview) study of program implementation. Each study is organized into background/introduction, methodology and results sections. A summary of results is also presented for each stud. The course outcomes study provides an overview of student success and

retention rates in learning community courses, as well as demographic, academic and assessment data, for learning community students and the overall Delta College student population. These data, along with a discussion of study findings, are presented in the **Study 1: Learning Community Course Outcomes** section. Surveys with demographic questions, a campus climate scale and a self-efficacy measure were distributed to students in learning communities at the start and end of the semester. The results of these surveys are presented in **Study 2: Learning Community Student Self Efficacy and Perceptions of Campus Climate**. The third study summarizes data collection methods and data obtained via interviews and focus groups with learning community faculty and learning community students. These findings are presented in the **Study 3: Learning Community Student and Faculty Interviews**. A final synopsis of the overall study findings is presented in the **Conclusions and Recommendations** section. Student survey open-ended responses, survey instruments, and student and faculty discussion guides are provided as appendices.

## STUDY 1: LEARNING COMMUNITY COURSE OUTCOMES

### BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

The short-term goals of the learning community program at Delta College are to build a sense of community and engagement among students, increase student awareness of resources at the College and to support student success in key courses. The aim of the present study was to determine whether learning community students are more likely to succeed in their learning community courses than students in comparable non-learning community courses. Each semester, learning community course success and retention rates are compared to success and retention rates in comparable courses without a learning community component. At the end of the spring 2009 term, data were obtained for learning community students, the overall College student population and for students enrolled in non-learning community sections of each learning community course. Specifically, the goals of the study were to:

- Describe learning community students in spring 2009 in terms of demographics, assessment levels and academic history
- Determine if learning community students differed demographically from the overall student population
- Determine if learning community students were more likely to pass their courses than non-learning community students
- Compare learning community students academically to students in non-learning community courses

### METHOD

Student demographic, assessment and academic data were obtained from the Delta College System 2000 database. A stratified random sampling procedure was used to obtain a comparison group for each learning community course. Students were stratified by the most relevant assessment level, e.g., reading levels for English 70 students, or were randomly selected from a non-learning community students enrolled in the same course section as learning community students (History 30A or History 30B, for example). The goal of this procedure was to obtain a relatively similar sample of students in learning community and non-learning community course sections.

In order to determine if the learning communities were effective at improving student success, success and retention rates were compared between students in learning community course sections and a stratified random sample or random of students in non-learning community course sections. Chi-square analysis was conducted to determine if there was a statistically significant difference between success and retention rates in each course type (learning community versus traditional courses). The results of the analysis are summarized below.

### RESULTS

#### Student Demographics

A total of 206 students participated in a learning community in spring 2009. A slight majority (53%) of the students were female, and a little over one third (34%) were African American. Nearly half

(45%) were under 20 years of age. The average age of learning community students was 23.6 years and the average unit load for learning community students was 11.09 in spring 2009. Learning community students generally represented the overall Delta College student population with a few notable exceptions: students in learning community courses were more likely to be African American and were less likely to be Asian or white, and learning community students were more likely to be under 20 years of age than the overall student population. Table 1 provides detailed demographic, academic and assessment data for both learning community students and the Delta College student population overall.

*Table 1. Demographics for All SJDC Students and Learning Community Students, Spring 2009*

	All Students (N= 20,330)		Learning Community Students (N= 206)	
	N	%	N	%
<b>Gender</b>				
Female	11,589	57.0%	109	52.9%
Male	8,406	41.3%	93	45.1%
Unknown	335	1.6%	4	1.9%
<i>Total</i>	<i>20,330</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>206</i>	<i>100.0%</i>
<b>Ethnicity</b>	N	%	N	%
African American	2,269	11.2%	69	33.5%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	308	1.5%	3	1.5%
Asian	2,613	12.9%	17	8.3%
Hispanic	5,784	28.4%	58	28.2%
Other, non-white	334	1.6%	3	1.5%
Pacific Islander	1,489	7.3%	11	5.3%
White	5,861	28.8%	30	14.6%
Unknown	1,672	8.2%	15	7.3%
<i>Total</i>	<i>20,330</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>206</i>	<i>100.0%</i>
<b>Age Category</b>	N	%	N	%
19 and under	6,427	31.6%	93	45.1%
20 to 24	6,573	32.3%	65	31.6%
25 to 29	2,416	11.9%	11	5.3%
30 to 34	1,515	7.5%	9	4.4%
35 to 39	1,106	5.4%	14	6.8%
40 to 49	1,561	7.7%	12	5.8%
50 and over	732	3.8%	2	1.0%
<i>Total</i>	<i>20,330</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>206</i>	<i>100.0%</i>
<b>Math Assessment Level</b>	N	%	N	%
Level 1 (Two levels below transfer)	5,895	29.0%	101	49.0%
Level 2 (One level below transfer)	5,379	26.5%	54	26.2%
Level 3 (Transfer level)	6,475	31.9%	43	20.9%
No Scores/Exempt	2,581	12.7%	8	3.9%
<i>Total</i>	<i>20,330</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>206</i>	<i>100.0%</i>

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Reading Assessment Level	N	%	N	%
Level 1 (Two levels below transfer)	5,777	28.4%	118	57.3%
Level 2 (One level below transfer)	8,352	41.1%	47	22.8%
Level 3 (Transfer level)	3,154	15.5%	30	14.6%
No Scores/Exempt	3,047	15.0%	11	5.3%
<i>Total</i>	<i>20,330</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>206</i>	<i>100.0%</i>
Writing Assessment Level	N	%	N	%
Level 1 (Two levels below transfer)	7,244	35.6%	109	52.9%
Level 2 (One level below transfer)	5,486	27.0%	68	33.0%
Level 3 (Transfer level)	4,037	19.9%	19	9.2%
No Scores/Exempt	3,563	17.5%	10	4.9%
<i>Total</i>	<i>20,330</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>206</i>	<i>100.0%</i>

*Table continues*

Table 1, continued

Academic Data	M	SD	M	SD
Units Attempted in Spring 2009	9.07	4.75	11.09	3.24
Fall 2008 Term GPA	2.70	.86	2.19	1.16
Spring 2009 Term GPA	2.50	1.24	2.11	1.26
Cumulative GPA as of Spring 2009	2.58	.95	2.08	1.10
Counseling Appointments (Spring 2009)	.46	.97	1.18	1.54
Registration: Number of Days Before Start of Spring 2009 Term	27.6	30.0	26.8	22.3

Source: SJDC System 2000 Database, June 8, 2009

In terms of assessment, learning community students were more likely to initially assess at Level 1 on math, reading and writing than the overall student population, an intuitive finding considering that three learning communities were offered for Level 1 students. Nearly half of all learning community students assessed at Level 1 on each assessment. Learning community students also attempted more units than the overall student population, which may be due in part to the learning community requirement of enrollment in two or three courses. Learning community students had an average spring 2009 semester GPA of 2.11 and a cumulative GPA of 2.08 as of the end of spring 2009 semester, both of which were lower than their respective averages in the overall student population. Learning community students registered for classes an average of 27 days before the start of the semester, similar to the average (28 days) for the overall Delta College student population.

### Course Success and Retention

The following section provides a summary of student success and retention in learning community and non-learning community courses in the spring 2009 semester. Results are presented for each learning community course, but student outcomes are aggregated across all learning community sections of that course. Stratified random and simple random samples of corresponding, non-learning community sections served as comparison groups for each course. Success and retention rates were compared using crosstabs with a chi-square analysis; the results of the analysis are presented in Table 2. Statistically significant differences are noted in the text and are bolded and in boxes in Table 2.

Table 2. Retention Rates for Learning Community and Non-Learning Community Courses, Spring 2009

Course	Enrolled		Successful		Retained	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Communication Studies 1A						
Non-Learning Community Sample	27	50.0%	20	74.1%	21	77.8%
Learning Community Sections	27	50.0%	17	63.0%	21	77.8%
<i>Overall</i>	54	100.0%	37	68.5%	42	77.8%
English 70						
	N	%	N	%	N	%

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Non-Learning Community Sample	66	50.0%	38	57.6%	44	66.7%
Learning Community Sections	66	50.0%	31	47.0%	40	60.6%
<i>Overall</i>	<i>132</i>	<i>50.0%</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>52.3%</i>	<i>84</i>	<i>63.6%</i>

*Table continues*

Table 2, continued

Course	Enrolled		Successful		Retained	
	N	%	N	%*	N	%
<b>English 79</b>						
Non-Learning Community Sample	52	50.0%	33	63.5%	38	73.1%
Learning Community Sections	52	50.0%	20	38.5%	37	71.2%
<i>Overall</i>	104	100.0%	53	51.0%	75	72.1%
<b>English 1A</b>						
Non-Learning Community Sample	92	50.3%	63	68.5%	67	72.8%
Learning Community Sections	91	49.7%	58	63.7%	69	75.8%
<i>Overall</i>	183	100.0%	121	66.1%	136	74.3%
<b>History 30A</b>						
Non-Learning Community Sample	32	50.0%	21	65.6%	22	68.8%
Learning Community Sections	32	50.0%	20	62.5%	22	68.8%
<i>Overall</i>	64	100.0%	41	64.1%	44	68.8%
<b>History 30B</b>						
Non-Learning Community Sample	28	50.0%	19	67.9%	25	89.3%
Learning Community Sections	28	50.0%	19	67.9%	20	71.4%
<i>Overall</i>	56	100.0%	38	67.9%	45	80.4%
<b>Guidance 5</b>						
All Learning Community Sections	112	100.0%	66	58.9%	85	75.9%
<b>Guidance 19</b>						
Non-Learning Community Sample	51	63.0%	39	76.5%	42	82.4%
Learning Community Sections	30	37.0%	10	33.3%	23	76.7%
<i>Overall</i>	81	100.0%	49	60.5%	65	80.2%
<b>Guidance 20</b>						
	N	%	N	%	N	%*

LEARNING COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT REPORT (JUNE 2009)

Non-Learning Community Sample	28	53.8%	22	78.6%	<b>28</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Learning Community Sections	24	46.2%	16	66.7%	<b>20</b>	<b>83.3%</b>
<i>Overall</i>	<i>52</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>38</i>	<i>73.1%</i>	<b>48</b>	<b>92.3%</b>
<b>Guidance 32</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Non-Learning Community Sample	35	50.0%	23	65.7%	32	91.4%
Learning Community Sections	35	50.0%	25	71.4%	30	85.7%
<i>Overall</i>	<i>70</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>48</i>	<i>68.6%</i>	<i>62</i>	<i>88.6%</i>

*Table continues*

Table 2, continued

Course	Enrolled		Successful		Retained	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>Library Skills 1</b>	N	%	N	%	N	%
Non-Learning Community Sample	20	50.0%	20	74.1%	23	85.2%
Learning Community Sections	21	50.0%	21	77.8%	21	77.8%
<i>Overall</i>	41	100.0%	41	75.9%	44	81.5%
<b>Math 73</b>	N	%	N	%	N	%
Non-Learning Community Sample	29	50.0%	21	72.4%	20	79.3%
Learning Community Sections	29	50.0%	16	55.2%	23	69.0%
<i>Overall</i>	58	100.0%	37	63.8%	43	74.1%
<b>Math 80</b>	N	%	N	%	N	%
Non-Learning Community Sample	21	50.0%	11	52.4%	17	81.0%
Learning Community Sections	21	50.0%	10	47.6%	18	85.7%
<i>Overall</i>	42	100.0%	21	50.0%	35	83.3%
<b>Reading 91A</b>	N	%	N	%	N	%*
Non-Learning Community Sample	39	56.5%	23	59.0%	<b>30</b>	<b>76.9%</b>
Learning Community Sections	30	43.5%	15	50.0%	<b>16</b>	<b>53.3%</b>
<i>Overall</i>	69	100.0%	38	55.1%	<b>46</b>	<b>66.7%</b>
<b>Reading 98</b>	N	%	N	%	N	%
Non-Learning Community Sample	35	50.0%	13	37.1%	21	60.0%
Learning Community Students	35	50.0%	16	45.7%	17	48.6%
<i>Overall</i>	70	100.0%	29	41.4%	38	54.3%

Note: Statistically significant differences are bolded in boxes

+ Significant at  $p < .10$

\*Significant at  $p < .05$

\*Significant at  $p < .01$

► **Communication Studies 1A (Fundamentals of Speech)**

One section of Communication Studies 1A (Fundamentals of Speech) was offered as part of the assessment level-based, transfer track learning community. Twenty-seven students were enrolled in the learning community section of Communication Studies 1A. A stratified random sample of 27 students enrolled in non-learning community sections of Communication Studies 1A was obtained for comparison of course outcomes. Non-learning community students were somewhat more likely (74%) to pass Communication Studies 1A than learning community students (63%), although the difference was not statistically significant. In terms of retention, learning community and non-learning community students were equally likely to be retained—both had a retention rate of 78% in Communication Studies 1A.

► **English 70 (Basic Writing Skills)**

Two sections of English 70 (Basic Writing Skills) were offered as assessment level-based learning community courses, and a total of 66 students were enrolled in these sections of English 70 (Basic Writing Skills). A stratified random sample (based on reading level) of 66 students was obtained from non-learning community courses. Non-learning community students were somewhat more likely to succeed (58% versus 47%) in English 70 than learning community students. Non-learning community students were also slightly more likely to be retained (67% versus 61%) in the course than learning community students, although the difference was not statistically significant.

► **English 79 (Preparatory English)**

A total of two sections of English 79 (Preparatory English) were offered as learning community courses, one of which was an assessment-level based learning community course; the other was an AFFIRM program learning community course. A total of 52 students were enrolled in these two English 79 sections combined. A stratified random sample of 52 students (stratified by initial writing assessment level) enrolled in non-learning community sections of English 79 was obtained. Similar to the findings for English 70, non-learning community students were significantly more likely to pass English 79 (64% versus 39%,  $p < .05$ ) than learning community students. Retention rates in English 79 were similar for both learning community (71%) and non-learning community (73%) students.

► **English 1A (Written Communications)**

Three sections of English 1A (Written Communications) were offered as part of a learning community in the spring 2009 term. One section was part of an assessment level-based learning community, another was part of the transfer-level AFFIRM learning community, and the third was offered as part of the Puente learning community. A total of 91 students enrolled in the learning community sections of English 1A. Students in non-learning community sections of English 1A were stratified by initial writing assessment level, and a total of 92 non-learning community students were selected for the comparison group. Success rates were similar for learning community (69%) and non-learning community (64%) students. Retention rates were also similar for both groups, with learning community students retained at a rate of 76%, and non-learning community students retained at a rate of 73%.

► **History 30A (African American History to 1877)**

One section of History 30A (African American History to 1877) was offered as part of an AFFIRM learning community, and 32 students were enrolled in that section. There was essentially only one History 30A course in the spring 2009 semester, and subset of the students in that course were in an AFFIRM learning community with an English 79 and Guidance 5 class. Because both learning community and non-learning community students were enrolled in the same course with the same faculty member, a random sample of 32 students who were enrolled in History 30A but were not part of a learning community served as the comparison group.

Non-learning community students and learning community students had similar success rates: 66% for non-learning community students and 63% for learning community students. Retention rates were equal (69%) for students in both groups.

► **History 30B (African American History Since 1877)**

One section of History 30B (African American History Since 1877) was offered as part of an AFFIRM learning community, and 28 students were enrolled in that section. This section was combined with another non-learning community section in the same classroom. A subset of the students in that course were in an AFFIRM learning community with an English 1A and Guidance 20 class. A random sample of 28 students who were enrolled in History 30B but were not part of a learning community served as the comparison group.

Learning community students were equally likely to pass History 30B (68%) as non-learning community students, but learning community students were significantly less likely to be retained in the course (71%) than non-learning community students (89%,  $p < .10$ ).

#### ► Guidance Courses

Four sections of Guidance 5 (Increasing Self-Esteem, Cultural Awareness and College Success), one section of Guidance 19 (Introduction to College and Educational Planning) and two sections of Guidance 20 (Transition to University Life) were offered as part of six different learning communities. No sections of Guidance 5 were offered separate from a learning community, and just one section of Guidance 19 was offered as a non-learning community course. One other section of Guidance 19 was part of an EOPS learning community; this section was excluded from the analysis.

All sections of Guidance 5 were part of a learning community. A total of 112 students were enrolled, 59% passed the course and 76% were retained.

Thirty students were enrolled in the learning community section of Guidance 19 in spring 2009. Fifty-one students were enrolled in non-learning community sections of Guidance 19. These students served as the comparison group for the learning community students. Non-learning community students were significantly more likely to pass Guidance 19 (77%) than learning community students (33%,  $p < .01$ ). Non-learning community students were also slightly more likely to be retained (82%) than learning community students (77%), although the difference was not statistically significant.

Twenty-four students were enrolled in the AFFIRM learning community section of Guidance 20, and 28 students were enrolled in the non-learning community section of Guidance 20; these students served as the comparison group for learning community students. Non-learning community students were somewhat more likely to succeed (79%) than learning community students (67%), though the difference was not statistically significant. Non-learning community students were also significantly more likely to be retained (100%) than learning community students (83%,  $p < .05$ ).

Thirty-five students were enrolled in the Puente learning community section of Guidance 32 (Career Information Interviewing). Two non-learning community sections were offered in the spring 2009 term. These two sections had a combined enrollment of 35 students, and these students served as the comparison group for learning community students. Learning community students had a slightly higher success rate (71%) in Guidance 32 than non-learning community students (66%), though the difference was not statistically significant. Non-learning community students had a slightly higher course retention rate (91%) than learning community students (86%), but again the difference was not statistically significant.

#### ► Library Skills 1 (Library Information Literacy)

Twenty-seven students were enrolled in the assessment level-based learning community section of Library Skills 1 (Library Information Literacy), and the same number were enrolled in the non-

learning community section of Library Skills 1. The non-learning community section served as the comparison group for learning community students. Learning community and non-learning community students had similar course success and retention rates: 78% of learning community students passed Library Skills 1, and 74% of non-learning community students passed the course. Non-learning community students had a slightly higher retention rate (85%) than learning community students (78%), but differences were not statistically significant.

► **Math 74 (Applied Mathematics) and Math 73 (Applied Mathematics Laboratory)**

One section of Math 74 (Applied Mathematics) in combination with Math 73 (Applied Mathematics Laboratory) was offered in an assessment level-based learning community. A total of 29 students were enrolled in the Math 74/73 learning community section. Multiple sections of Math 73 and Math 74 were offered as non-learning community courses in spring 2009. A total of 338 students were enrolled in non-learning community sections of Math 74 and Math 73. A random sample of 29 students enrolled in non-learning community Math 73 sections was obtained for comparison purposes.

Non-learning community students were more likely (72%) to pass Math 73 than learning community students (55%). Similarly, non-learning community students were more likely (79%) to be retained than learning community students (69%); however, differences were not statistically significant.

► **Math 80 (Elementary Algebra)**

One section of Math 80 (Elementary Algebra) was offered in an assessment level-based learning community in the spring 2009 term, and 21 students were enrolled in this section of the course. A stratified random sample of 21 students (stratified by initial math assessment level) enrolled in non-learning community sections of Math 80 served as the comparison group. Non-learning community students were slightly more likely to succeed (52%) in Math 80 than learning community students (48%), but learning community students were somewhat more likely to be retained (86%) in the course than non-learning community students (81%), although neither difference was statistically significant.

► **Reading 91A (Reading in Literature)/Reading 98 (Individualized Reading Skills)**

In spring 2009 one section of Reading 91A (Reading in Literature) and one section of Reading 98 (Individualized Reading Skills) were offered as part of two different assessment level-based learning communities. Thirty students were enrolled in the learning community section of Reading 91A, and 35 students were enrolled in the learning community section of Reading 98.

One non-learning community section of Reading 91A was taught by the same instructor who taught the learning community section of the same course; 39 students were enrolled in that section and served as the comparison group. Non-learning community students had a somewhat higher success rate (59%) than learning community students (50%), although the difference was not statistically significant. Non-learning community students were also retained in the course at a significantly higher rate (77%) than learning community students (53%,  $p < .05$ ).

A total of 331 students were enrolled in non-learning community sections of Reading 98. A stratified random sample (stratified by initial reading assessment level) of 35 students enrolled in non-learning community sections of Reading 98 was obtained for comparison purposes. Learning community students were somewhat more likely than non-learning community students to pass Reading 98 (46% versus 37%), although the difference was not statistically significant. Interestingly, non-learning community students were more likely to be retained (60%) than learning community students (49%), although the difference was not statistically significant.

### ► Additional Analyses

Given that learning community students had, on average, lower cumulative GPAs prior to the spring 2009 semester, logistic regression analyses were conducted to determine if learning community students had a greater likelihood of success after controlling for previous academic performance (cumulative GPA). Learning community participation was a positive and statistically significant predictor of success only in Reading 98 (Individualized Reading Skills). For all other courses, learning community participation was not a significant predictor of student success after controlling for previous cumulative GPA.

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The results of the present study indicate that learning community students differ from the general student population in important ways. Learning community students were more likely to be African American and less likely to be white or Asian, and learning community students had significantly lower levels of academic performance than non-learning community students. Perhaps because of this, learning community students were generally less likely to succeed and be retained in courses than their non-learning community peers. Although initial assessment level was used as a matching variable for comparison group sampling in many courses, learning community and non-learning community comparison students entered the spring 2009 semester at different levels academically. This may, in part, account for the findings presented in this study. It should be noted that sample sizes for many learning community courses were rather small; thus, the results of this study should be interpreted with caution. The findings of this study are summarized and interpreted within the larger context of the other two studies in the **Conclusions and Recommendations and Conclusions** Section.

## STUDY 2: LEARNING COMMUNITY STUDENT SELF-EFFICACY AND PERCEPTIONS OF CAMPUS CLIMATE

### BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

The major goals of the learning community program are to increase student engagement, build a sense of community among students and faculty and increase awareness of campus resources. To determine if the learning community program was meeting these goals, surveys were distributed to learning community students at the beginning and end of the spring 2009 semester. Items on the survey were derived from program goals and included demographic and academic questions, an academic self-efficacy scale and a campus climate scale. In addition, the follow-up survey included a series of questions about students' reasons for enrolling in and overall reactions to learning communities.

### METHOD

#### Participants

Surveys were distributed to students in learning communities at the start and end of the spring 2009 semester. Surveys were distributed in one course session per learning community, and students were asked to include their student identification numbers on the survey so that baseline surveys could be linked to follow-up surveys. Ninety percent ( $n = 186$ ) of students who enrolled in a learning community completed the baseline measure, and just over half (60%) completed the follow-up survey. Only 105 (51% of all students enrolled) baseline surveys could be matched to follow-up surveys. Table 3 provides demographic and academic data for baseline survey respondents, follow-up survey

respondents and students who completed both surveys. In general, students in each group were rather similar on many demographic measures: the majority of baseline, follow-up and matched survey respondents were female, and the vast majority of respondents were also from minority ethnic backgrounds. A greater proportion of Hispanic and smaller proportion of African American students completed the follow-up survey. Nearly half of respondents in each group were under 20 years of age. More first-time students completed the baseline survey than the follow-up survey, and just over half of the students in each group were employed. Only about one in four respondents in each group had dependents.

*Table 3. Student Demographic and Academic Profiles, Baseline and Follow-Up Survey*

Gender	Baseline		Follow-up		Matched Cases	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Female	106	57.0%	68	54.8%	62	59.0%
Male	79	42.5%	56	45.2%	42	40.0%
No response	1	.5%	0	0.0%	1	1.0%
<i>Total</i>	<i>186</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>124</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>105</i>	<i>100.0%</i>

*Table continues*

Table 3, continued

Ethnicity	Baseline		Follow-up		Matched Cases	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
White	26	14.0%	19	15.3%	18	17.1%
Hispanic	69	37.1%	56	45.2%	47	44.8%
African American	50	26.9%	21	16.9%	19	18.1%
Asian	12	6.5%	11	8.9%	7	6.7%
Filipino	3	1.6%	3	2.4%	2	1.9%
Pacific Islander	0	0.0%	2	1.6%	0	0.0%
Native American	2	1.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Other	24	12.9%	12	9.7%	12	11.4%
<i>Total</i>	<i>186</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>124</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>105</i>	<i>100.0</i>
Age	N	%	N	%	N	%
19 and under	92	49.5%	59	47.6%	51	48.6%
20 to 24	57	30.6%	37	29.8%	31	29.5%
25 to 29	9	4.8%	7	5.6%	5	4.8%
30 to 34	8	4.3%	6	4.8%	6	5.7%
35 to 39	9	4.8%	6	4.8%	4	3.8%
40 to 49	9	4.8%	6	4.8%	5	4.8%
50 and over	2	1.1%	3	2.4%	3	2.9%
<i>Total</i>	<i>186</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>124</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>105</i>	<i>100.0%</i>
Units Completed	N	%	N	%	N	%
None	61	32.8%	22	17.7%	26	24.8%
1 to 6	23	12.4%	16	12.9%	14	13.3%
7 to 12	33	17.7%	17	13.7%	17	16.2%
13 to 18	29	15.6%	23	18.5%	21	20.0%
19 to 24	12	6.5%	23	18.5%	10	9.5%
More than 24	25	13.4%	20	16.1%	17	16.2%
No response	3	1.6%	3	2.4%	0	0.0%
<i>Total</i>	<i>186</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>124</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>105</i>	<i>100.0%</i>
Hours Worked/Week	N	%	N	%	N	%
None	88	47.3%	54	43.5%	48	45.7%
1 to 10	19	10.2%	11	8.9%	12	11.4%
11 to 20	32	17.2%	25	20.2%	20	19.0%
21 to 30	25	13.4%	12	9.7%	16	15.2%
31 to 40	14	7.5%	16	12.9%	7	6.7%
More than 40	4	2.2%	4	3.2%	1	1.0%
No response	4	2.2%	2	1.6%	1	1.0%
<i>Total</i>	<i>186</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>124</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>105</i>	<i>100.0%</i>
Number of Dependents	N	%	N	%	N	%
None	139	74.7%	89	71.8%	80	76.2%
1	17	9.1%	16	12.9%	11	10.5%

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2	17	9.1%	13	10.5%	7	6.7%
3	7	3.8%	3	2.4%	5	4.8%
4	3	1.6%	2	1.6%	1	1.0%
More than 4	3	1.6%	1	0.8%	1	1.0%
<i>Total</i>	<i>186</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>124</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>105</i>	<i>100.0%</i>

## Measures

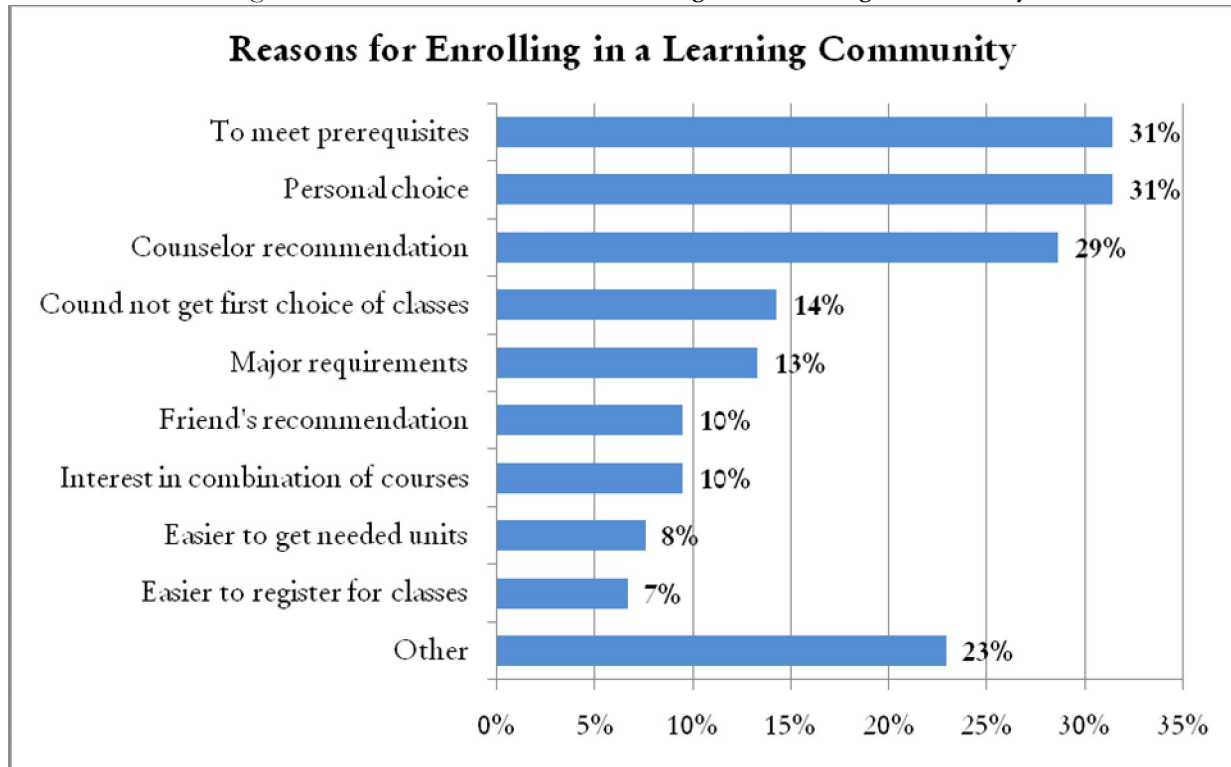
Baseline surveys included just demographic, academic and academic self-efficacy items; follow-up surveys included demographic items, academic items, questions about the learning community experience, an academic self-efficacy scale and campus climate scale, as well as three open-end items about students' learning community experiences. Campus climate scale items asked students to rate how often they could say a number of positive things about the College and included a seven-point Likert response scale, with 1 indicating a response of 'never' and 7 indicating a response of 'always'. Items on the academic self-efficacy scale asked students to rate how well they performed a number of learning-related tasks and included a seven-point Likert response scale, with ratings of 1 indicating 'not well at all' and ratings of 7 indicating 'very well'. On the follow-up survey, students were asked why they enrolled in a learning community and what they thought of their learning community.

All items on the climate and academic self-efficacy scales were positively scored, with higher ratings indicating more positive perceptions of the campus climate and higher levels of academic self-efficacy. A copy of the baseline survey can be found in **Appendix A**, and a copy of the follow-up survey is provided in **Appendix B**.

Reliability analyses were conducted on both baseline and follow-up responses on the academic self-efficacy scale and campus climate scale. Both scales had acceptable internal consistency ratings. The baseline academic self-efficacy scale had a reliability of .89, and the follow-up scale had a reliability of .94. The baseline campus climate scale had a reliability of .93, and the follow-up scale had a reliability of .94. Mean scores were calculated for both baseline and follow-up responses on the climate scale and academic self-efficacy scale. Means and standard deviations for each survey are noted by subscript, with a B subscript for baseline measures and an F for follow-up measures.

## RESULTS

Students enrolled in learning communities for a variety of reasons. Among students who completed the follow-up survey, the most common reasons for enrolling in a learning community were to meet prerequisites, due to personal choice, and based on counselor recommendation. Figure 1 illustrates the various reasons students enrolled in learning communities.

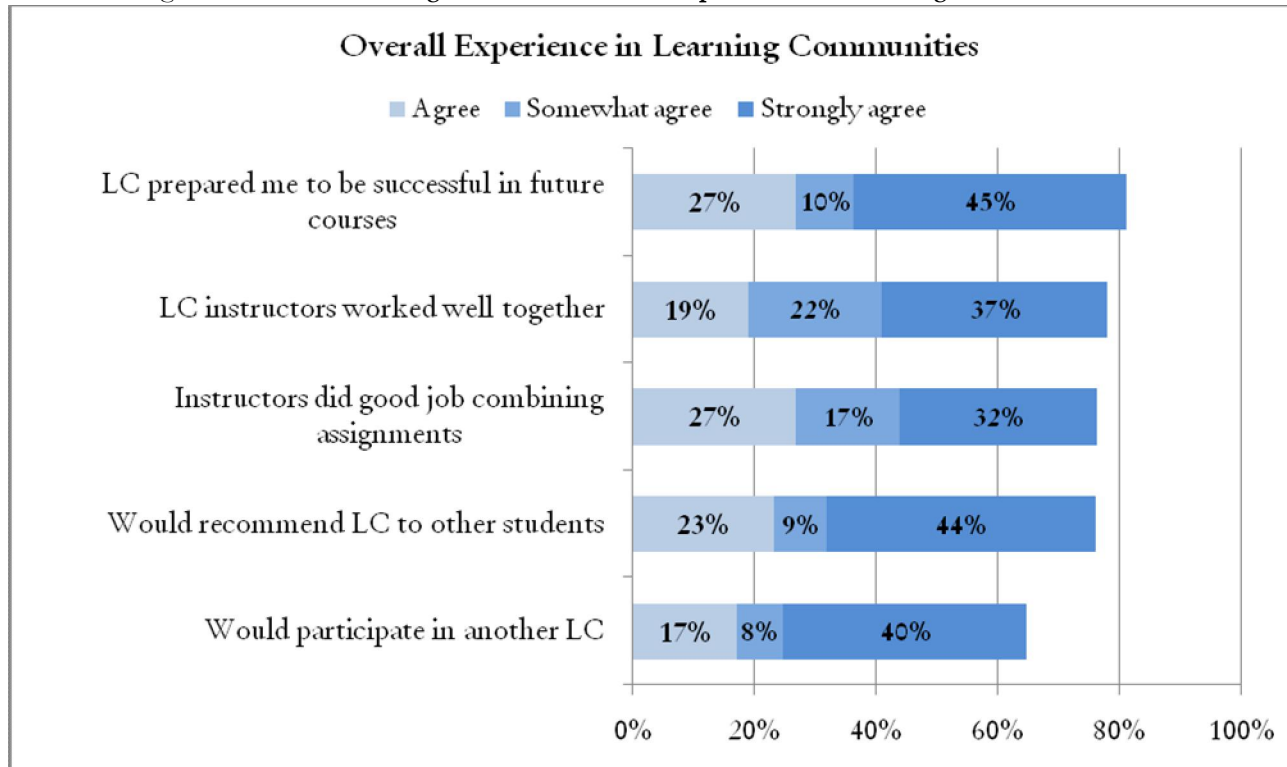
*Figure 1. Student Reasons for Enrolling in a Learning Community*

*Note:* Each student may have selected multiple responses

Students who indicated they enrolled in a learning community for another reason were asked to specify or describe the reason. Students provided a number of different reasons, such as getting assistance during their first term on campus, assessment level and appropriate placement in the courses and meeting new friends and faculty. A number of students also said they were unaware they were registering for a learning community and enrolled in the courses by accident. A full list of verbatim student responses are provided in **Appendix C** and student responses grouped by theme are provided in **Appendix D**.

Many students rated their experiences in learning communities positively. Over three in four respondents (82%) agreed that their learning community helped them be successful in their future college classes. A similar percentage (78%) of respondents agreed that their learning community instructors worked well together. Seventy-six percent of respondents agreed that their learning community instructors did a good job of integrating their assignments, and the same percentage said they would recommend their learning community to other students, and 65% said they would participate in another learning community. Figure 2 illustrates the responses to each of the overall learning community experience items.

Figure 2. Students Ratings of Their Overall Experience in Learning Communities



In terms of changes between the beginning and end of the spring 2009 semester, students who completed both the baseline and follow-up surveys had significantly more positive perceptions of the campus climate at the end of the spring 2009 semester ( $M_B=5.13$ ,  $SD_B=1.02$ ;  $M_F=5.57$ ,  $SD_F=1.11$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Contrary to expectation, students' academic self-efficacy scale scores were equal at baseline and follow-up ( $M_B=5.38$ ,  $SD_B=.94$ ;  $M_F=5.38$ ,  $SD_F=.98$ ,  $p > .05$ ).

The vast majority of respondents provided positive or corrective open-ended comments at the end of the survey. When asked what they would improve about their learning community, 102 of the 124 students who completed a follow-up survey (82%) provided a response, and a number of students said they were already rather satisfied with their learning communities. In terms of suggestions for improvement, many students said they would like to see more integration of their courses and assignments. Several students mentioned some instructor-related issue or suggestion, and, conversely, other students said they appreciated their instructors and applauded their efforts to help students learn.

When asked what they liked best about their learning community, all but two students responded with positive comments about their experiences. The majority of respondents said they enjoyed the sense of community, support and friendship they built in their learning communities. Many students complimented the high quality of their learning community instructors, and some students said their learning community experiences improved their learning and motivation to succeed. A number of students also said they particularly enjoyed their experience in guidance classes.

Lastly, students were asked to provide any additional comments they had, few students provided any additional feedback. Of those who did respond to this item, many comments were similar to the most common responses to the other two open-ended items.

## DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Students enrolled in learning communities for a variety of reasons, the most common of which were to meet prerequisites, due to personal choice or counselor recommendation. Several students mentioned that they enrolled in their learning community by accident, which may indicate a need for additional advertising of learning communities in the registration process. Overall, learning community students rated their experiences during the spring 2009 semester rather positively. The vast majority of students said their learning community prepared them for success in other courses. The program appears to have left a very positive impression with its students: the majority said they would recommend their learning community to other students, and over half said they would participate in another learning community. Students generally rated their learning community instructors highly: nearly three in four students agreed that their instructors worked well together and did a good job of combining their courses.

Learning community students' perceptions of the College's campus climate improved significantly from the start of the learning community to the end of the term and completion of the program. This finding shows that student experiences in learning communities may lead to more positive feelings toward the College overall, as well as toward faculty and other students. Learning community students' academic self-efficacy ratings, however, did not change from the start to the end of the semester. There are a number of possible explanations for this finding. It may be that learning community students were already confident in their skills and abilities at the start of the term, and that there was little room for improvement in this area. It may also be that students' initially inflated estimates of knowledge and abilities at the start of the program left little room for improvement. This problem may be alleviated in part by including retrospective pre-test items on the follow-up survey to determine if students rate their prior knowledge similarly at the end of the program.

As with any study, there are a number of limitations to the present study. Not all students were present when baseline surveys were distributed in learning community classes, which presents the possibility of a selection bias. In addition, less than half of the students who completed the baseline survey also completed the follow-up. This may be due to the fluidity of student enrollment at the beginning of the term: many students may have been present for the baseline survey but dropped the course before the follow-up survey was distributed. In light of the low number of matched baseline-to-follow-up cases, the results of the survey may not be representative of all students enrolled in learning communities in spring 2009. In addition, because other factors external to the program may have influenced student ratings of the campus climate, these findings should be interpreted with caution.

Future learning community surveys should be conducted with historical data to determine the overall impact of the program on individual student outcomes, such as perceptions of campus climate and academic self-efficacy. Furthermore, longitudinal studies of student persistence, graduation and transfer should be conducted to determine if learning community participation is related to long-term student outcomes.

## STUDY 3: LEARNING COMMUNITY STUDENT AND FACULTY INTERVIEWS

### BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

The learning community process is a rather dynamic one, and program processes, course structure, instructor communication and group dynamics may influence program results. The Title V grant, awarded in 2005, provided the funding for a more structured learning community program. In theory, Title V learning communities require that participating faculty attend learning community program trainings, integrate two course assignments, meet monthly with learning community faculty group and utilize the College's Academic Alert program. These requirements are intended to standardize program implementation and ensure that each learning community is generally implemented as intended. Previous studies of learning communities at Delta College have focused on student success and student satisfaction, but no studies have been conducted to describe and assess program progress and implementation.

The present study aimed to describe learning communities in practice, determine what was working well and what could be improved upon and gather faculty and student opinions of the program. Specifically, the goals of the study were to:

- Assess faculty satisfaction with training and resources
- Describe learning community teaching and learning experiences in and out of the classroom
- Identify any challenges or barriers to program implementation
- Identify best practices in program planning and implementation
- Describe student experiences in the program
- Identify reasons students enroll in learning communities
- Assess student perceptions of the College, the faculty and other students
- Gather faculty and student recommendations for program changes

In order to obtain detailed information on student and faculty experiences, individual interviews and focus groups were selected as the data collection method for the study. Interview guides were drafted for both faculty and students, and questions on the interview guides were derived from program goals and objectives. Faculty questions pertained to faculty training and initial involvement in the program, satisfaction with the program and recommendations for change. A copy of the faculty interview guide can be found in **Appendix E**. Student questions were related to student involvement in the program, satisfaction with the program and perceptions of the College overall. A copy of the student interview guide is provided in **Appendix F**.

### METHOD

#### Faculty

All 16 faculty members who taught a learning community course in spring 2009 were invited to participate in the study. Faculty members were given the option of attending one of four scheduled focus group sessions or scheduling an individual interview if none of the sessions fit their schedules. A total of 11 faculty members participated in the study. As a thank you for participating, each faculty member received a USB storage device. Individual interviews lasted about 30 minutes, and faculty

focus groups lasted about 60 minutes. All participating faculty were asked the same questions, and each faculty interview or focus group was digitally recorded to ensure accurate data collection and analysis.

A number of themes emerged from faculty responses. These themes are summarized in the **Results of Faculty Interviews** section, and quotes illustrating each theme are provided below each summary.

## Students

One faculty member teaching in each type of learning community was asked if they would be willing to let their students be interviewed before, during or immediately after class. A total of 41 students in four different learning communities participated in the study. Of those, just over half (54%) were male. Focus groups were conducted in a Level 1 and Level 2 learning community guidance class, in a Level 3/Transfer learning community English class and at a Puente learning community end-of-semester event. The same questions were asked of students in each learning community. A copy of the student focus group discussion guide can be found in **Appendix G**.

Each student focus group lasted about one hour, and participation in the study was completely voluntary. Students were provided with USD storage devices as a thank you for their participation. Several themes were revealed in student responses. These themes are presented with corresponding quotes in the **Results of Student Focus Groups** section.

## RESULTS OF FACULTY INTERVIEWS

Faculty members were asked a series of questions about their learning community recruitment and training, the process of teaching a learning community course and integrating curricula, the impact of learning communities on student persistence and performance and any benefits of the learning community program. Faculty responses are summarized below.

### Recruitment and Training

Faculty were asked (1) to describe how they became involved with learning communities at Delta College, and (2) how satisfied they were with the learning community training they received at the College. The majority of faculty said they were recruited by the Learning Community Coordinator, either personally or via campus-wide email. Many faculty members said they heard about learning communities via conferences, workshops or teaching literature prior to teaching in a learning community at the College.

In general, faculty had very positive expectations and perceptions of learning communities, and many said they taught in a learning community to give their students an additional support mechanism to succeed. Some faculty said they taught learning communities to not only get their students more involved but to become more familiar with other faculty from different divisions and disciplines. Faculty stated:

- “I thought right away that it was a good idea for them to get some extra support in sort of a social way and then also maybe practical ways of learning, the kinds of things you don’t cover in the classroom.”
- “I heard that these are good ways for students to succeed, to have that community.”
- “For me it was giving more skills to my students than I knew I had to give them. I was new to Delta, so I didn’t know how to help them...I was hoping for someone with additional resources to give them that other end that I know they still needed and I knew I still wanted to give them.”

- “I like the concept also because I felt that a big part of retaining students is for students to feel like they belong. And I think they feel like they belong really quickly when they are part of a learning community.”

In terms of training, not all faculty were able to attend the pre-semester workshops offered through the Guidance and Counseling Division. Among those who did attend the workshops, they generally described the training as informal and as a cursory overview of what they could expect while teaching in a learning community. Overall, faculty members were rather mixed about the training they received: some believed the training was adequate, while others felt the need to plan and work more closely with other faculty members teaching in learning communities. Nearly all faculty interviewed said they would like to have more time at the start of the semester or during the semester before to plan ahead and integrate assignments with their fellow learning community instructors. Faculty noted:

- “I think [the trainings] were good for a start but were really very thin...we just talked about what we each taught; there wasn’t really any training. I didn’t mind that kind of training, but I thought we should have had more meetings. And then I thought we should have really had more time to understand the goals of each class.”
- “I think that [the training] has been beneficial...I am very comfortable with that, satisfied with that, but it’s the working together with the other team members: I would like to have us do more of that...more articulation among the [faculty] members.”
- “There was an initial meeting where we were to discuss our plans as a group, but there hasn’t been as much guidance in terms of the co-planning.”

A few faculty members said they would like some additional guidance on working with other faculty members, aligning course goals, developing integrated curricula and, in particular, effectively managing a classroom with very engaged, and at times disorderly, students.

### **Process and Implementation**

Faculty were asked what they thought of the learning community process at the College, and what, if anything, they would change about it. On the whole, faculty appeared rather satisfied with the learning community process at Delta College and were particularly pleased with the ability to work closely with other faculty members. Faculty said they enjoyed working with their faculty team to develop shared curricula and assignments.

In terms of meeting and communicating with one another, learning community instructors had a variety of different arrangements with their faculty partners. One group of learning community faculty said they met in person about once per month but stayed in contact via email on a weekly basis. Other faculty groups said they only met once during the semester and stayed in touch via email as needed. Most faculty members agreed that greater communication would improve their and their students’ experiences with the program, although some faculty did express some concern about the time required to do so.

During the course of the semester, faculty members encountered some significant challenges with their learning community courses and students. Perhaps the most notable challenge, student behavior and

classroom management proved to be a major issue in most learning community classrooms, particularly in Level 1 and Level 2 learning communities. In the lower-level learning communities, faculty indicated that they had students with a wide range of skill levels in math, reading and writing. Several learning community faculty said that their students lacked the basic behavioral control required for college classes and appeared completely unaware of behavioral norms and classroom expectations.

- “The bad thing about the first semester [teaching in a learning community] was, because it worked so well to socialize them, they didn’t learn to discipline themselves. They were constantly talking; it was like a big party all the time.”
- “It took me about six weeks to get all these issues straightened out....for learning communities, this is an extra challenge. I think they are all great people. Individually they are all great people, but together they can make a really noisy classroom because of the habits of talking loud or visiting, or cross-talking or interrupting, when class is in session. They thought this was normal.”
- “Sometimes learning communities, because of registration, attract students who might not have good habits of social behavior.”
- “They get so close; there are discipline issues.”
- “You have to really be in control. As a group, lots of friendships are built.”
- “They become very good friends, and you have to appreciate that; otherwise, discipline-wise it could be very frustrating.”

Other student issues proved to be somewhat of a challenge for learning community faculty as well. Across all student skill levels, faculty said their students experienced a number of personal problems during the term, including health, financial and family problems.

- “They have such horrible, horrible struggles, life struggles, at this low level...health issues, horrible health issues...trying to get to class, trying to hobble around on crutches...health problems for their family members...”
- “I teach the lowest level writing, and the students really struggle; and they have so many outside problems besides just the academic problems.”
- “I know for our student population one of the issues that will crop up a lot is the lack of economic resources that they have—not having texts, unable to get up and running—so a lot of time students will say, ‘do you have an extra book that I would be able to use until I get my financial aid money?’”
- “There are so many students who are having problems this semester: someone who had to drop out because he couldn’t afford to go on...and someone who lost her mom at the start of the semester and at the middle of the semester had to go through a major surgery...I think that outside circumstances also play a role. And this is a very challenging semester for lots of people; it hits the people who are economically, financially challenged, and it hits some people who are so stressed out, they don’t know how to do things.”

Faculty said they believed that students in learning community courses registered closer to the start of the semester than other students. There was a sense among faculty that learning community students tended to be less college-ready than the general student population. A number of faculty said their students were at lower skill levels than students in their comparable non-learning community sections.

- “I think there is a connection with how they end up...and hopefully if it can get going more, this will be an in-demand program rather than a default program, which I am afraid that it is to a certain extent.”
- “I feel that maybe the students are the ones who come in at the very last minute and we shove them in...they are not very motivated, they have big learning issues: these are the ones that I see. There was a big drop out because they were not prepared for college at all, the ones that are dropping out.”
- “If I were going to guess, I would guess a majority of students are selecting the program because it fits the time slot, not that they really know about the program...”
- “The least favorite thing was knowing that they sign up for it last. I was really under the impression that they would sign up for it first...I was quite surprised about that.”
- “My non-learning community had much better students overall.”
- “My learning community students were much more underprepared.”
- “Interestingly, the challenge that we faced in both semesters are social problems. It could be because learning community classes are usually the last ones to be filled. We get stragglers who don’t plan well and then we often end up with a class of students with a very high percentage of students who don’t know how to behave in a classroom.”

Similarly, many faculty said it was particularly difficult to try and meet all students’ needs because they came into the learning community at such dramatically different skill levels. Several faculty said that an improved placement system would help alleviate these problems.

- “I still find that I have too many weak students and I think that is the result of their assessment here...that was very frustrating because here they are, already part of a team, and they didn’t have the basic skills. They should have been in another class.”
- “My biggest problem with it is that the students are not all at the appropriate levels for an English 70: some are way above it and taking [English] 70, and some are way below. We had a couple of people who were basically illiterate.”
- “This semester I just have such weak students that that’s really held me back. I had smarter students last semester, or at least more knowledgeable students, but they just weren’t willing to work so hard. The motivation was the problem, but this semester it’s the skill level that’s the problem.”
- “I was blown away at how low they were. There were students who would have been fine in [the lower level course].”

In addition to student behavior issues, faculty they experienced some difficulty with the scheduling and timing of linked assignments. Many faculty members felt they needed more time to communicate and plan with other learning community faculty about course goals, curricula and assignments. The lack of communication and planning was, at times, an issue for integrating curricula in time. When one course’s assignment depended on that of another course, a hold-up in one course created a ripple effect for assignments in the other courses.

- “There should have been more time spent on developing the shared assignments...and ahead of time...just doing things as the semester starts...it’s okay, but I like to plan it in my head. For me it would be better if we actually planned for next semester.”
- “It’s the timing issue. There’s a certain timeframe you have to give speeches and...then there’s the research that has to be done to do the speech. Linking the timeframe is the only thing we need to tweak.”

- “There was one project right at the start, I think it was my second unit, and [another learning community faculty member’s] schedule was delayed for one week, so that threw my projects off...with a learning community it’s not quite forgiving if your time is swapped a little bit or put off a little bit because all these are really tied in together.”

### Student Learning and Performance

Faculty were asked what they thought about the process of linking course curricula and whether they noticed any differences in student learning, development or performance among their learning community students. All skill level-based learning community faculty members said that they linked at least one assignment between their learning community courses. Special program learning community faculty said they did not specifically link assignments for their courses but that they integrated discussion topics from other learning community courses. In terms of student learning, faculty generally viewed linked curricula and assignments as worthy means of providing a broader context and perspective to their subject matter.

- “I think we did some good work there. I think there was a little bit of leveraging...they really wanted to do the minimum amount of work, but I think we motivated them to see that there was some value beyond just that they could go out and party.”
- “Based on the students’ feedback, it really helped the other classes.”
- “I can’t speak to other communities of classes, but I think our classes link up perfectly...so it’s actually making my job a lot easier because we’re reinforcing everything with each other. It’s like a reinforcement thing, the more you hear it, the more you see it, the better you are going to learn it. So, to me it just makes sense.”
- “The kind of expansion of possibilities and the larger context [are benefits].”

Linked assignments varied by learning community and instructor and ranged from a math autobiography written in English class to research papers and speeches for a Communication Studies class. Faculty members believed that linked assignments and curricula reinforced course content and helped students understand interrelated concepts. Many faculty also said that linking courses helped them give more tools and resources than they alone could give to their students. Several faculty indicated that they would like to further integrate their courses in the future.

- “I really like the shared assignment, although I want it to be more built into the rest of my class in the future.”
- “The more that we know about what’s going on in the other classes, the more we can throw little things in and even just speak to what they are doing.”
- “We’re still learning. We managed to kind of link things in time fashion, but [more leveraged learning is] the thing that the three of us are really going to try and achieve next semester...we’d like to kind of build into it that integration.”

Even though faculty members cited a number of positive student outcomes, many faculty members said that, based on their current class’s progress, they did not expect retention and academic performance in their learning community courses to differ from those in their non-learning community sections. Several faculty members attributed this trend to student skill levels prior to enrolling in the learning community.

### Student Engagement

From the faculty perspective, the learning community experience was a very positive one for their students. There was a strong consensus among faculty that their learning community students were more engaged, more supportive of one another and, in some cases, even more motivated to persist than students in their non-learning community courses.

- “I found that students really watched out for each other. If sometimes one student is absent, other students will take handouts for him or will copy down the homework. And even yesterday one student came in and said there’s no way I am going to pass this class. I am going to drop out. And all the other students started to counsel her and say, ‘You have come this far, so why do you drop out?’ She ended up staying, and I think that she is going to pass. That kind of group work, group support is really a very good strength of learning communities.”
- “The best thing for me is their dynamic with each other, the support, the knowing when someone is absent, the dynamic it creates with each other as they go.”
- “...in terms of students dropping out, I think that once it stuck, the ones who are still there and who are finishing the semester are certainly more engaged with each other.”

Faculty also praised the ability of learning communities to bring students together and build a supportive environment in which to work.

- “I recognized right off that they were more comfortable with each other socially because they spent that other class time together...I end up actually building up their group dynamic really quickly.”
- “I have two different sections...the students tend to work very well: they’re comfortable...folks are able to give constructive feedback and they’re really positive with one another when someone does something that’s really good. They use language to just be very affirming.”

Some faculty said their students bonded so greatly that they not only studied together but socialized with each other outside of class. This observation was particularly prominent in the transfer-level learning community.

- “I am seeing that the students really are forming that bond, that engagement, not only with the instructors but with themselves. You can see that outside the classes. They will go to the movies and they’ll do things; they’ll study together.”
- “They know each other very well. They are like friends now. So that social aspect is really beneficial.”
- “The learning community concept worked fine because the kids, they knew each other. They were comfortable with each other because they were all in the same class. They helped each other out; they formed a community. They were not as reticent about talking. They were comfortable with each other, so that made for a much more comfortable atmosphere.”

Even in Level 1 and Level 2 learning communities, faculty members said the experience not only helped their students feel more comfortable speaking in class but helped transform some of their initially quiet students into confident speakers and peer tutors.

- “This semester was wonderful really [because of] the changes I saw, especially in one student who was very shy and antisocial at the beginning but very bright...by the end, he was in a small group kind of tutoring them, but in a wonderful way.”

- “I just really do like that they become friends and that they seem to support each other socially and emotionally.”
- “It’s rich. We’re all comfortable with one another and engaged.”

In terms of other benefits beyond social support, faculty members said their learning community students were more enthusiastic and modeled that enthusiasm and engagement for their peers. A couple of faculty members said their learning community students even appeared to be more motivated to learn than their other students.

### **Benefits to Faculty**

Faculty members were asked if they would recommend teaching in a learning community to their colleagues, and every instructor interviewed said they would recommend the program. Overall perceptions of the learning community concept and even the program in practice were very positive. Faculty believed that learning communities helped build cohesion not only among their students but among themselves. A few new faculty members said the learning community experience was a great way to meet other faculty, especially faculty from other divisions.

- “Communicating with your team is the biggest thing. I think the more the three teachers talk together, the more you can get ideas. Just so everybody’s on the same page.”
- “We had some good brainstorming, and it was fun. I enjoyed getting to know other faculty.”
- “I actually love the aspect of working with the other faculty.”
- “I think working with the colleagues has been wonderful because we stay in contact, coordinate our game plan.”
- “And I am a new faculty here, and I thought it would be a great way to get to know people from other areas.”

Several learning community faculty said the experience working with other faculty helped them expand their perspective of their own subject and teaching style.

- “It’s very positive. It gets you to look at your teaching in another way, gives you a larger context for teaching. I think it’s just potentially exciting, and it’s always great to work with another faculty member, especially someone from a different division.”
- “I’ve thought deeper about my teaching and I’ve gotten ideas from other instructors. I felt validated in some sense, too, because I see it’s not just me having a little trouble with these students talking...I’ve appreciated the contact with the other instructors and getting their ideas on teaching.”

In addition, faculty members said that teaching in a learning community helped them feel more connected to Delta College, to the students and to other faculty. A number of faculty said they liked having the ability to communicate with their colleagues to develop a plan to help students who were struggling in class. Faculty members also said they enjoyed the ability to run ideas past their learning community colleagues and work together to solve common problems.

- “I feel much more connected to that learning community than I do to my other [course sections].”
- “What I found more useful is actually the teachers getting together in the middle of the semester... we often got together for lunch, and during lunch we talked about the students, we talked about our assignments, and we brainstormed possibilities for solving problems that we faced.”
- “To hear the difficulties other groups are having is actually valuable to me because, what’s working with my group, I could lend a hand and a thought over there.”

Faculty members were asked what they thought of team teaching and whether they would be interested in participating if such a program were in place at the College. Overall, faculty were optimistic yet cautious about the idea of team teaching. Many faculty said they would enjoy team teaching and appeared interested in the concept; others, however, were concerned about the logistical issues associated with team teaching. Among faculty concerns were productivity statistics and payroll issues, as well as limitations on academic freedom.

- “I’ve done [team teaching] before, and it can be fun.”
- “I’m not sure how it would work with my class.”
- “The whole thing with that is the two teachers have to buy into it. You’ve got to have the right other person...the key is whether those two teachers want to do it. And if they do, then it will probably be successful, but if they are railroaded into it, it may or may not be.”

### Recommendations for the Future

Based on their experiences in learning communities, faculty members offered a number of recommendations for future iterations of the program. Many faculty said they would like for the program to be better advertised to students so that they know what they are getting into and intentionally register for learning community courses. In addition, faculty consistently expressed a need for more contact and communication with not just their own learning community group of

faculty but other faculty teaching in other learning community courses. Specifically, faculty members said that they would like to have more regular meetings and communication among learning community faculty. In addition, faculty suggested a social activity for faculty and students at both the beginning of the semester (for introductions) and again at the end of the semester (to serve as the culmination of their work together).

- “I think that if we got together as faculty and tried to figure out ways that we could leverage each other’s work, perhaps creative ideas could flow.”
- “If you guys had the space, it would be pretty nice if we had a little conference room that was easy to find...even if you reserved the Mustang Room for us...so there’s a space and it’s always going to be a certain spot... that would be helpful. Really, we’ve all yearned for a faculty lounge.”
- “Plan on having a little social, maybe that could be a little helpful; but to have it outside of class, that’s hard on the students and hard on the instructor...maybe in the guidance class we could all go for a little social.”
- “I think if there is special funding...for the learning community cluster to meet together and just have like a social time and casual feedback among us—maybe some activities together, an outing together—it might be better.”
- “I think a pre-semester kickoff would be great because we want to try to link them quicker...get together at the beginning at kind of a reception thing and talk about what it’s all about...maybe share our syllabi.”
- “If they provided lunch for us mid-semester I could see that being valuable because we do enjoy that time together...it might be a good idea to get together and say, at this stage, ‘What are the problems our students are having?’ because then maybe we could bounce things off across not just the people we’re working with but hear what the other communities are dealing with as well.”

Faculty also recommended additional efforts to advertise the program and increase awareness of the program among faculty. Many learning community faculty believed that their colleagues would be interested in the program if they knew more about it.

- “I think everything is good except that people who want to participate...somehow there should be more of an open platform [for them].”
- “If the faculty knew more about them, there would be a lot more of them; they would be more popular. I think a lot of faculty are afraid of them because they seem like more work. So that is why I think more faculty discussions could actually show how it could be more exciting.”
- “I would love to be able to have other colleagues in [my department] who are experienced in this...and I know one of the reasons is money. Because it’s with an English class, we can only take up to thirty, and many [department] instructors take up to sixty, fifty-five or sixty students, which are extra load and extra pay... I think financial reasons may be why some people have not come forward...maybe people are not aware of [the stipend].”

Individual faculty members expressed some other, more specific concerns and recommendations for the program. A couple of faculty members mentioned the need for a book loan program for their low-income students. One faculty member indicated that the special program learning communities were underutilized by the target population and recommended an increased effort to recruit more target population students. Another faculty member expressed disappointment with the group

dynamics among learning community faculty and recommended that learning community instructors receive additional training on professional courtesy and teamwork.

- “Certainly, the AFFIRM community is intended for African American students, [and is] trying to address those issues that are unique to that student population. So I would like to see more of those students involved in the learning community... [this term] maybe a third [are African American students].”
- “The thing that I really resented was the discussion of individual teachers within the classroom, another classroom, and then feedback given to me...I think that’s very unprofessional...I like to handle those things on my own. I felt like they were telling what was going on in the classroom without getting my side of it.”

Even though faculty members had many suggestions for program changes, the overall sense from faculty was that the learning community program was a positive experience. Learning community faculty appeared to be supportive of the learning community model and program and were willing to share their experiences, successes, frustrations, likes, dislikes and recommendations for the future. Faculty were generally satisfied with the learning community program process but faced some challenges with their learning community students in the classroom. Most notably, faculty believed their students benefitted socially from participating in a learning community. Faculty were, however, less certain as to whether learning community student performance differed from that of students in other classes. Faculty themselves believed they benefitted from teaching in learning communities, and many faculty felt more connected to their colleagues, the students and the College as a whole as a result of their learning community experience.

A synopsis of faculty responses, implications and recommendations is presented in the **Conclusions and Recommendations** section.

## **RESULTS OF STUDENT FOCUS GROUPS**

Students were asked a series of questions about why they enrolled in a learning community, what they thought about their overall learning community experience, and whether they would recommend learning communities to other students. Students were also asked how connected they felt to the College, to the faculty and to other students on campus. A summary of student responses are provided below.

### **Reasons for Enrolling in a Learning Community**

Students were first asked how and why they enrolled in a learning community. The majority of students in each assessment level-based learning community said their enrollment in a learning community was accidental. Many students said they were unaware of what a learning community was when they enrolled, and a number of students said they merely tried to add one class that they needed and fit their schedule; to their surprise, their efforts resulted in the addition of three courses to their schedule.

- “I didn’t even know this was a learning community when I signed up, not until the first day. The only reason why I took this class, or these classes, was because they were the last ones that were available.”

- “I didn’t even know. I just signed up for English because I need it, and it gave me two other classes. And I deleted the other two classes, and it deleted me out of English. I couldn’t drop any of them because if I drop one, I drop all three.”
- “At first I didn’t know what a learning community was; I just picked the [English] class.”
- “Me, I was just trying to enroll in English 79, and then, bam! I got two more.”
- “I pretty much wanted to get into English, and it gave me two more classes with it.”

A few students across the three assessment level-based learning communities said that learning communities were recommended by a counselor or a friend and that they expected a more positive learning experience in the program. Puente learning community students were enrolled in the second semester continuation of a learning community, and the majority of students in Puente were recruited by Puente program staff while they were still in high school.

- “I registered and had a representative that was going to my school. They gave me a flyer, and at orientation I was there.”
- “My friend told me to join it because they helped students transfer, and they guided them through the program to tell them if you want to do this, this is right for you. If we took guidance class and English class, it would help us with college life and for a university.”

The majority of students agreed that learning communities should be more clearly identified in the registration process and that a thorough description of learning communities and expectations should be provided to students before or at the start of the semester. Some students in the Level 1 and Level 2 learning communities expressed frustration with the add-all, drop-all learning community policy. These students said they would like more flexibility with the scheduling and recommended allowing students to drop one learning community class later in the semester.

### **Overall Perceptions of the Program**

Students had generally positive perceptions of learning communities. There was a consensus among students in each learning community that their experience in the program was a positive one and that they would recommend learning communities to other students. Students described the program favorably:

- “I would strongly recommend it. I am glad I accidentally clicked on it.”
- “I like learning communities better [than regular courses].”
- “A learning community is a good way to slow the pace down for everybody.”
- “I think it was a good experience.”

### **Student Engagement and Social Support**

Although the level of group cohesion varied in each learning community, nearly every student interviewed said he or she made friends with learning community classmates, and for many students, this increased feeling of friendship and social support is what they liked best about their learning community. Several students described their learning community group as a family, and a number of students said they felt much more connected to other students as a result of their participation in a learning community.

- “It’s given me more of an opportunity to get to know the students and develop better friendships...some of the people in these classes, we are going to try and take classes [together] next semester.”
- “I feel very connected because of what this community has done networking-wise.”
- “It’s like a big family.”
- “It does actually make it fun because you know basically all the students in the class. It’s good to have diversity in a classroom, but going from class to class where you know hardly anyone in each class...you don’t get a chance to know the other students...no one can be friends.”

There was a consensus among students in each participating learning community that the rapport they built in and out of the classroom improved not only their comfort in speaking out and asking questions in class but their confidence in their own learning and abilities.

- “Being in the learning community made me feel more comfortable.”
- “Having to ask a question in front of class: because I know everybody I don’t feel as embarrassed if the answer is wrong. I am able to get my ideas out there.”
- “You build a rapport with the students. You see them every class. You feel more confident.”
- “You know what is really nice about it, too, is that we got really personal about things that happened to us in our class, and you kind of have to let that go. And it makes you respect each student individually and get to know who they are, where they are coming from...it kind of helps you loosen up. You get to know how to interact with the students. It helped me a lot”
- “It’s good because in the two classes, English and speech, you have to get up in front of people and talk or present certain things. It helps if you are more comfortable around people you are around.”

In addition, many learning community students believed that their collaborative learning experiences and ability to work closely with their classmates improved their learning overall. Perhaps most prominently in the transfer learning community, students believed they benefitted from group activities, open discussion and the social support of their classmates. Transfer learning community students noted:

- “It’s a structured way of learning or a way of building a support system...if you want a community setting.”
- “We do a lot of group activities...we’ll talk in groups and read each others’ papers, and we’ll read and work with each other.”
- “Five people would review your paper, so you get five people’s opinions.”
- “To be able to make friendships here, and then being able to actually study and get all your feedback from everybody else in the class is helpful. If I don’t get into a learning community again, I think this will help me still in the classes I don’t have learning communities in...that’s what I have learned from this: how to get together and form [groups]...definitely the way I have been able to relate to everybody here, I will want that in my next class.”
- “Normally, you just have the teacher’s opinion on how your paper was, but in this class everybody was like, ‘you should do a little more over here,’ and ‘add more of this’.”

### Perceptions of Learning Community Faculty

Learning community students' positive feelings extended beyond their classmates to their faculty members. Students in every learning community interviewed said that they believed their instructors cared about their success. Even students who had small objections to a faculty member's course structure or assignments believed that their faculty members were generally good people. Many learning community students said their instructors went beyond the call of duty to provide support and structure to their experiences.

- "They give us a heads-up and kind of help us in what direction we want to go."
- "It's just good to see that teachers actually care about their students."
- "It's like [the faculty] actually care about your grade and you as a person."
- "I feel the teachers here really do care. They want to make a difference."
- "I think she's a good teacher. Even though she gives us a lot of work, it helps us learn more."

Several students said they particularly appreciated the communication between their instructors and the involvement of each instructor across the other courses and even in their lives. Students in the transfer learning community praised their faculty members for being easily accessible and understanding.

- "Our English teacher would come to our speech class and watch our speeches...that showed how dedicated they were to us. It shows that he cares."
- "It's nice because it makes me feel that what he gave to us as an assignment he cares about in our other class."
- "The way they work together: they did a lot in the beginning. I do like [the faculty]. You could actually go and ask [faculty], and they were really helpful."
- "I have a relationship with all of my professors, even outside of the learning community."

In the learning communities with a guidance course component, students expressed much appreciation for their faculty members and counselors. Students in these learning communities said their guidance class helped them learn about on-campus resources and feel more connected to the College in general. Even in learning communities without a guidance course, students said they benefitted greatly from having a counselor visit their class and speak to them about goals and academics.

- "I would advise any student coming back to college or coming for the first time to at least take one guidance course because it answers a lot of questions."
- "This [guidance] class helped me feel connected to the College."
- "I will email [the counselor], and I will get a response right away."
- "This [guidance] class actually gives you a lot of information. This is the class gives you all the information you need in order to succeed."
- "I have benefited a lot. The guidance helped me learn how to study better. I am really just a wait-to-the-last-minute procrastinator, and I still have a problem, but it is getting better. And the main thing is that I have learned something from it and there are tools now that I can use."
- "[Having the counselor in class] I didn't even know where counseling was...it made me think that maybe I want to transfer from here instead of just getting my units done. I actually went to do an education plan after that."

### **Reactions to Learning Community Activities, Linked Courses and Assignments**

Aside from increased engagement, improved learning and sense of camaraderie, students mentioned web-enhanced course features, community service requirements and field trips as course characteristics

they liked. Although the degree with which courses in each learning community were integrated varied greatly, students had generally positive perceptions of linked course activities and assignments,

- “It’s not exactly easier but less stressful.”
- “Having them linked you are able to turn something you put a lot of effort into, like a paper, into a speech.”
- “I loved it. It made it easier to link the assignments.”
- “We were working hard the entire time during the semester...it was like one big project. I don’t think I would be able to do a major speech, a major paper and still be able to do a math class at the same time.”
- “[I like] that they linked together the necessary classes.”
- “The linked assignments help you understand.”
- “The [linked assignments] helps us for the future—how to cut it short and make it interesting.”
- “It got us well-rounded about our own school.”

A major theme across all learning communities was the desire for more course integration and faculty communication. All students interviewed said they had at least one linked assignment in their learning community courses, and the majority said they would like to see more integration between their classes. Among students who said they had only one linked assignment, there was a major need expressed for additional course integration and communication and teambuilding among the faculty.

- “To me this is like a regular class...I don’t see a difference...I don’t think of it as a learning community because to me it’s not; it’s just a class. You are learning different things in different classes—they are not talking. I go to math class and the class [instructor] is not going to be like, ‘oh, what did you learn in English? Or ‘what did you learn in guidance class?’ To me it doesn’t seem like something that to me is a community.”
- “If you are going to be in the community’s center, then you have to be willing to teach and be willing to know and get involved in the student’s life and classes...and try to help students in class. I think that’s the biggest issue we had.”
- “The only good thing to me is that everyone is in the same class, so if you do have problems, you have students to talk to ...the teachers help you with that subject but not anything else.”

### Perceptions of the College

Learning community students had rather positive perceptions of the College, both in terms of academic programs and student support services. The majority of students interviewed believed that the College provided all the tools necessary for students to succeed—if students are willing to seek the help and focus on their education.

- “You have to actually be willing to succeed in life. If you want something you better look for it...it can't be easier than it is already. It's pretty supportive already. You just have to be willing to do it for yourself.”
- “I think Delta offers you a lot if you really think about it...they offer a lot: basically any class you want to take, you can take here and cheaper. This is where you've got to start and then transfer out. It will save you a lot of money, and like I said, there are a lot of teachers that are really good teachers here.”
- “This is my first college experience, so this is my first class, and I seriously love it.”
- “They tell you exactly what you need to get in and get out. If you are here and you are serious about [goals], they are serious about it, too.”
- “They give you all the resources you need if you are willing to take it.”
- “I think it's a great school.”

Students described the College, the faculty and the staff as welcoming and dedicated to the students.

- “They always tell you, college is hard...in this class, they give you the work and they help you do it.”
- “I haven't had a real negative experience with people outside or inside the learning community.”
- “Everyone is totally welcoming: always nice and willing to help you.”

Several students said the College's faculty and counselors helped them feel valued and important as individuals, and some students even said that the College was a vast improvement over other colleges in the area.

- “At [another community college] I didn't get any knowledge about the college from any of my professors...here I was welcomed by the teachers, and when I made a counseling appointment I was welcomed by the counselors.”
- “They actually look at you as an individual, they look at what you want to be, what you want to take. [The counselor ask] ‘What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses? And [they say] ‘let me put you in classes that will help you get good grades and be a better individual’.”

Lastly, students mentioned the College's student email and information system and its convenient, inexpensive parking and centralized location as some of their most-well liked features.

- “The student email, once you are in there, they send you all kinds of emails on everything. If you need this, reminders for financial aid. They send you reminders to remind you what you need to do. If you are doing badly, they have some days for tutoring and they tell you where it's going to be.”

- “For the most part, whenever I log on, the email system is actually very helpful.”
- “There is good interaction or good response...it’s neat to see [someone] from your college emailing you. This is the first college [I’ve been to] where everybody gets their own email.”
- “The campus is a lot better since it’s together [rather than split between two campuses].”
- “I love the parking! Here the two parking lots in Shima are so much bigger than [another community college]. Overall, the campus is set up a lot better.”

### Areas for Improvement and Recommendations for the Future

While students overall had positive perceptions of their learning community, students in each learning community did provide some suggestions for program improvement. While some students merely disagreed with instructor teaching style, others said they believed their instructors did not communicate enough to understand what each other was doing or assigning in class. The common theme that emerged from student responses was a need for more faculty communication and, in some cases, a more collegial learning environment.

- “It’s not a really high class as it is...you are learning the steps of how to do what you have to do, so instead of the teacher bringing you down, he/she should be teaching you a way to make you better and a stronger person.”
- “We did a math survey in here, and we were supposed to do a graph in our math class, and then in our English class we were supposed to write about it. Well, we never did that.”
- “To me, linked assignments were basically the same [as non-linked assignments].”
- “A lot of us felt intimidated to speak out...we felt like [the instructor] was going to get back at us.”
- “In our class no one would raise their hand or no one would really talk in class because if you say something [the instructor] is going to contradict what you are saying and he is always going to end up right.”
- “In that class we can’t say what we want to say because we’re afraid that [the instructor] is going to screw us over with our grade. In there we had no opinion.”

Students also expressed some concern about the add-all/drop-all policy for learning communities. Some students said they would like more flexibility or would like to be notified when they register about the learning community attendance requirements and policies. In light of these concerns, students made a number of suggestions to alleviate some of these issues. Some students said they would like faculty who teach in learning communities to be committed to student development and success, and other students said they would like to have more open communication with faculty about concerns without the fear of retribution. A final, more positive, recommendation posed by students was increased advertising and publicity of the learning communities program.

In sum, student perceptions of the learning community program were generally positive, although there some areas in which students believed the program could be improved. Many students said the program was a positive experience for them overall, and virtually all students interviewed said they gained something, socially or academically, from participating in a learning community.

A synopsis of student responses, implications and recommendations is presented in the **Conclusions and Recommendations** section.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## CONCLUSIONS

The findings of the present study reveal some major strengths of the learning community program. Students appear to benefit greatly by building social support networks with their peers. Faculty members also appear to benefit from their participation in a learning community. Many faculty members said they enjoyed working with colleagues from different programs or divisions, and several faculty expressed a need for more faculty communication and regular contact. The improved sense of community among students and faculty was also evident in students' ratings of the campus climate. After participating in a learning community, students rated the College's climate, in terms of services, other students and faculty, significantly more favorably. There was, however, one downside to the increased student engagement in class. In pre-college level learning communities, many faculty said they had a difficult time with classroom management because students felt so comfortable with one another they became disruptive. Additional training or acknowledgement of this issue in learning community trainings may provide new learning community faculty with the tools necessary to reduce this problem early in the semester.

Faculty members and students shared experiences, opinions and recommendations for the program's future. Overall, faculty members and students had positive perceptions of the program, evidenced by student survey responses and faculty and student interview results. Both groups appeared to be most pleased with the increased engagement in learning community courses. In terms of areas for improvement, faculty suggested additional training, regular contact with other learning community faculty and improved communication with their learning community group. Faculty also recommended increasing awareness of the program among faculty and students. Students also provided recommendations for program improvement. Many students said they would like to see the program more widely and clearly advertised to students, and, like the faculty, students expressed a need for more learning community faculty communication. Students generally favored integrated curricula and assignments, and many students said they would like to see even more integrated courses in the future.

Although student engagement was a major strength of the learning community program, it did not appear to translate into improved academic performance among learning community students. In every learning community course, learning community students were just as likely or significantly less likely to pass than their non-learning community peers. Similarly, learning community student retention rates were significantly higher only in History 30A (African American History to 1877); in all other courses, learning community students were either as likely or significantly less likely to be retained than other students. These findings are not particularly surprising since learning community students had consistently lower GPAs coming into the program than their non-learning community peers.

It should be noted that there are a number of limitations to this component of the study. Sample sizes were relatively small for most learning community courses, which made differences in success and retention rates difficult to detect. Students were matched on initial assessment level, but that may not have been the only factor indicative of success. Future studies should attempt to match learning community students to non-learning community students in a more systematic way. Ideally there would be enough students enrolling in the same combination of courses as learning community students; however, when this was attempted in the current study, fewer than five students were enrolled outside of the program in each combination of learning community classes. Additional

studies investigating the long-term impact of learning communities on engagement-related outcomes, such as term-to-term persistence, should also be conducted.

The qualitative component of the study provided additional insight into the implementation and process of teaching and learning in a learning community at Delta College. However, there are a number of limitations to the data gathered in student and faculty interviews. Not every learning community was included in student interviews, so the findings presented in this report may not reflect the opinions of all learning community students. In addition, not all faculty teaching in a learning community were able to be interviewed; thus, the ideas expressed in this report may not represent the opinions of all learning community faculty. Two special programs intended to serve distinct student populations were included in the present study: AFFIRM and Puente. These two programs provided additional support to their students, such as counseling, mentoring and social activities. Because students in these programs receive additional services, each program's learning communities should be examined separately in future reports.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the student and faculty interviews, there are a number of ways in which the learning community program may be improved. First and foremost, additional efforts should be taken to advertise the program, its benefits and participation requirements to both faculty and students. This may increase awareness of the program on campus and improve student understanding of what learning communities are and why they may or may not be a good fit for them. In addition, faculty teamwork and communication appear to be an important part of the program's success. Faculty expressed a need for regular contact and a meeting space for learning community instructors. If possible, regular optional discussion sessions should be scheduled during the semester so that learning community faculty can build a cohesive, supportive community and discuss common problems and solutions.

There appears to be great variability in the degree to which learning communities integrate curricula and assignments. Some faculty expressed a need for additional guidance or resources to improve the curriculum integration process. In addition, several faculty mentioned that classroom management was particularly challenging in their learning community courses. Future learning community trainings should incorporate each of these issues and, if possible, provide a forum in which faculty can discuss these issues.

Lastly, some students did not clearly identify a link between their learning community courses, and others viewed their learning community as just a combination of required courses. Many students expressed a desire for more integrated assignments and activities. In light of these findings, it may be helpful for the learning community program and faculty to focus on a theme for each learning community, one that is based on more than just assessment levels. Focusing each community on a specific theme may improve contextualized learning and may ultimately improve the program for students and faculty alike.

**APPENDIX A**  
**LEARNING COMMUNITY STUDENT BASELINE SURVEY**

1 Date: \_\_\_\_\_

About you:

1. What is your Delta College Student ID? \_\_\_\_\_

2. How many units have you completed at San Joaquin Delta College?

- None
- 1-6
- 7-12
- 13-18
- 19-24
- More than 24

3. How many hours per week do you work during the semester?

- None
- 1-10
- 11-20
- 21-30
- 31-40
- More than 40

4. How many dependents do you have (children for whom you are responsible)?

- None
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- More than 4

5. What is your date of birth? \_\_\_\_\_ ———— \_\_\_\_\_  
MONTH DAY YEAR

6. What is your gender?       Male                       Female

7. What is your ethnicity?

- White                       Hispanic                       African American                       Asian
- Filipino                       Pacific Islander                       Native American                       Other

LEARNING COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT REPORT (JUNE 2009)

Please fill in the responses that best describe how you feel or think about the statements listed below.

How often can you say...	1 Never	2 Rarely	3 Less often	4 Some of the time	5 More often	6 Most of the time	7 Always
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"/>

LEARNING COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT REPORT (JUNE 2009)

How well can you...	1 Not well at all	2	3 Not too well	4	5 Prett y 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"/>



**APPENDIX B**  
**LEARNING COMMUNITY STUDENT FOLLOW-UP SURVEY**

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2 Date: \_\_\_\_\_

About you:

8. What is your Delta College Student ID? \_\_\_\_\_

9. How many units have you completed at San Joaquin Delta College?

- None
- 1-6
- 7-12
- 13-18
- 19-24
- More than 24

10. How many hours per week do you work during the semester?

- None
- 1-10
- 11-20
- 21-30
- 31-40
- More than 40

11. How many dependents do you have (children for whom you are responsible)?

- None
- 1
- 2
- 3



LEARNING COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT REPORT (JUNE 2009)

Overall Impressions of the Learning Community

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I would participate in another learning community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. I would recommend this learning community to other students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. The learning community prepared me to be successful in my future classes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. My learning community instructors worked well together.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. My instructors did a good job combining their assignments.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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	2	3	4	5	6	7
How often can you say...	Never	Rarely	Less often	Some of the time	More often	Most of the time	Always
15. 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"/>
16. 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"/>
17. 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"/>
18. 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"/>
19. 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"/>
20. 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"/>

LEARNING COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT REPORT (JUNE 2009)

21. My teachers are approachable	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
22. I feel comfortable asking other students for help	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
23. I feel a sense of belonging at Delta College	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
24. My teachers know me	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
25. I feel comfortable asking my teachers for help	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
26. I like to study with other students	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
27. I have made friends at Delta College	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
28. My teachers treat students fairly	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

LEARNING COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT REPORT (JUNE 2009)

As a result of the learning community, how well can you...	1 Not well at all	2	3 Not too well	4	5 Prett y well	6	7 Very well
23. 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"/>
24. 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"/>
25. 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"/>
26. 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"/>
27. learn math concepts?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
28. 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"/>
29. 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"/>
30. 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"/>
31. learn reading skills?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
32. 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"/>
33. 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"/>
34. 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"/>
35. take class notes?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
36. 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"/>
37. 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"/>
38. learn writing skills?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
39. 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"/>
40. learn English grammar?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
41. 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"/>
42. 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"/>
43. organize your schoolwork?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
44. 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?

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

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3. Any other comments:

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APPENDIX C

LEARNING COMMUNITY STUDENT SURVEY VERBATIM OPEN-ENDED RESPONSES

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**QA8\_8. Reasons for Enrolling in a Learning Community, Other Specified**

Accident  
Accidentally clicked  
Actually, English 1A and Communication Studies 1A were full at the time of class selection, so I took this, but I was so surprised at how wonderfully these classes work together!  
Assessment scores  
Didn't score high enough on test  
Didn't know I did  
Didn't want them but had to have them in order for me to be able to take English 79.  
Easier, more comfortable to know and work with the teacher and students.  
English 70 for English 79 for English 1A  
Experience and opportunities offered with the program  
First time at Delta  
Get to know some more friends  
I am on double academic probation  
I didn't even know I was enrolled in a learning community  
I felt compelled to give back to the community whenever possible; the migrant conference gave me that opportunity  
It's a good start for a first-time student  
Just registered for one class and got other classes added  
Mistake  
Really like William's Teaching!  
Refresh memory  
Said it was a good opportunity  
Support  
They put me in here  
To refresh, getting back into school  
To work with other students to gain confidence  
Wanted a refresh

No response (4)  
Not asked (75)

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

Actually label the classes: easier to find communities.  
Actually working together on assignments: the structure or transitions from paper to speech could be improved  
Add more courses to a learning community, such as general education classes.  
Adding more classes to the learning community in my opinion would greatly improve it. We'd have more units to work with.  
Basically at the learning center, the faculty and staff are efficient and beneficial.  
Being able to ask one person for things I missed.

Being able to know the student "classmates" that were in the class with me. I wasn't really shy to talk with the same classmates in all my classes.

Continue to provide outstanding leadership in the role of the educators.

Delta College teachers do a great job of teaching. The teachers do not need to improve. I think they are great!

Discipline some of the talking students and make them separate in seating in class.

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

**(Continued)**

Do more reading and writing in class.

Do not change the professor in the middle of the semester.

Do not have [instructor] as a teacher; she's [expletive deleted]; more time, less hardcore work [Instructor] needs to learn how to speak to people without putting everybody down every day.

Everything in the learning community went pretty well, but maybe library class should be on the same level as the other classes.

For lab time there should be more teachers available to help students. Most of the time students wait a while before they are helped.

For my English [class], the assignments online were confusing.

Get a new English instructor that actually teaches his subject.

Get classes that fit better in the learning community.

Get rid of library class

Get teachers that are more involved and actually make students feel comfortable rather than the opposite: teachers that are willing to help students, teachers that have more communication with each other

Get the instructors to work together better and understand the work load that is required from each teacher for their students.

Give more units.

Have a study session.

Have better instructors that can teach you what is needed in writing.

Have communication.

Have teachers that are willing to help the student: teachers that know what they are getting into.

Having a center for the learning community could really help.

I believe that everything is good to go.

I did not like the library class. I think it could be improved.

I don't think I would change anything!

I don't know of anything that could be improved. Everything seems okay to me.

I don't know that there needs to be any improvements made. The learning community was very efficient.

I don't know very much about how the learning community is supposed to operate. What I do know is that there is supposed to be a connection between three classes. One of the ways Ms. Robinson made this possible is by setting some class time aside to let us study for each of our history tests.

I don't think anything can be done to improve the learning community. I think everything was done really well.

I enjoy how all three classes were together and the same students were in all three classes, just in case you missed a class. You can ask another student if they have the information in class.

I enjoyed having the same people in each class. It makes it easier to get to know everyone and help build friendly relationships.

I enjoyed my classmates sharing events and experiences they had. I knew several of my classmates by name and that made me more willing to ask questions without feeling terribly uncomfortable.

I enjoyed the connection with the learning community.

I learned to read to the class.

I like everything. They're doing really good.

I like it the way it is, but to improve it, maybe we should have more class exercises in class, like talking all together and saying how we feel.

I like how the learning community already is. The only thing that could be improved is the care for the koi pond.

I like it the way it is. My instructors and students have been my saving grace.

I really have nothing that I would improve because I loved the learning community and the friends I made.

I really like the learning community. You become close with those in your class and you help each other out a lot.

I think it is run very good.

**COMM 1. In your opinion, what could be done to improve the learning community?  
(Continued)**

I think it would be better if there were not so many assignments for reading: it makes me get backed up with homework.

I think that it is already good as it is, but if it improves in any way I think that it will still be the same.

I think that the pace for everything in this class is good; maybe involve the guidance class a little more with the math class

I think the classes shouldn't be spread out like that because I get lazy to come back to school after my morning class.

I think the learning community is great the way it is.

I think the learning community is organized pretty well already.

I think the learning community was not a good idea. I got too comfortable with my classmates and goofed off a lot.

I think there is always room for improvement, such as the teacher and the learning material.

I think they did a good job.

I think we should be given the opportunity to have more lab hours.

I'd like to have it with unrelated classes, too.

If it is not broken, don't fix it.

In my humble opinion, I would incorporate a math course in correlation with the English and counseling courses. Have the learning community participate in more events that benefit the students by providing resources that are not readily available. Allow the students to be empowered and more self-sufficient.

In my opinion, learning communities improved learning some things this year. I hope I will be improved next year.

In my opinion, the learning community can be improved by having more group discussions and class activities.

[I need to ] learn to focus better and not let other people get in the way of school.

It needs no improvement.

Less homework and more activities

Less homework

Library class should be more correlated with the other two.

Library should correspond with the other two classes.

Like more class assignments together.  
Make it so you do not have to drop all three classes; find more helpful students  
Make this a two-year program to prepare us for the day we transfer; make this learning community open to students of other races, such as Caucasians, Filipinos, African Americans, etc.  
Maybe [schedule] a meeting with the student and all three teachers to listen to input or improvements.  
Maybe if [instructor] allowed you to email or talk to him to ask questions  
Maybe the library class: make it easier to relate it and coordinate it better with the other two classes.  
Maybe work a little more on the arrangements on assignments.  
More classes in fact every course should offer a learning community. I really enjoyed it.  
More contact, counseling toward the students  
More help: I have slow learning. It is hard for me to accomplish a task; I have lots of worries.  
More integrated assignments between classes.  
More open classrooms, like the tutor center to work on homework and more tutors!  
More supportive teachers that are willing to work with each and every student if needed.  
More time learning.  
My opinion is a biased one because I haven't been enrolled that long. As far as this first year, I am very pleased with the group of teachers and students.  
New English instructor!  
Nothing: I really like it. Maybe if it is a learning community have only us in a class instead of a forum.  
Nothing: I think the class was good. Even if you know the material already, they show better ways of doing it.  
Nothing: it is already good.

**COMM 1. In your opinion, what could be done to improve the learning community?  
(Continued)**

Nothing: it's a good program.  
Nothing: the learning community worked out very well, but more integrated assignments would have been a great way to be more prepared in my writing.  
Nothing: they're awesome. Big suggestion: offer more of them!  
Nothing. Mr. Baker is the best teacher. He covered any useful information well.  
One more day during the week added will be helpful.  
Our English instructor needs to be someone more involved with us.  
[I need to] pay more attention and do more school/homework when due. Keep a positive attitude.  
  
Personally, I think what needs to be improved is the attendance of the teachers. That way we will improve our level and we will interact more with our classmates and teachers.  
Talk to students more to find out their needs and what they really need help with.  
Tell people how the learning community can help in improving their lives and help in the long run with college and class.  
The communication between teachers; synchronizing all three classes, not just two; if one is online, all should be (even grade progression)  
The guidance class was perfect: learned a lot about the UC and CSU systems and how they work. The English instructor was a nice guy but teaching-wise I didn't really learn anything.  
The learning community can be improved by maybe having more students because some of the classes were small; have all the classes on either Monday, Wednesday and Friday or Tuesday and Thursday  
The library teacher was not really on point with the other two teachers.

The only drawback of my learning community was the large size of my History 30B class. It did not really feel like a community because the class was mainly students who were not in the community.

The real truth is that I think there's nothing I could do about it. I think the learning community is all really good.

The teachers should communicate more so that they don't assign big projects at the same time.

To succeed in a learning community, you need to be able to connect with the instructors, be able to say what you feel and state your opinions without being put down. The teachers are there to support and help you when you need help.

Well, I think the learning communities did what they could to help the students.

Well, I think the program is great, but me personally, I had problems with the English instructor putting me down; but I stopped paying attention to the negativity. I think we need more alone time with the counselor.

Use more class material that will need grammar and writing skills.

No response (22)

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

A lot of one-on-one time to break things down so we get the full understanding

All the community service we did helped me network and meet a lot of successful people whom I can look up to. My teachers, Mr. Canela and Mr. Ramirez, really helped me become a better student, and they keep me motivated to do better.

All the math you can learn at your pace; how well the teachers and lab teachers can help you understand it

Being part of something good; it feels great to be getting a little smarter

Classmates, meeting new people

Everyone knows each other

Everyone, everything all the time!

Everything; the field trip but not coming back from the field trip

Everything! The people (friends I made), the professors, how the professors and students worked together so well

Felt very comfortable with teachers and classmates

**COMM 2. What did you enjoy most about the learning community? (Continued)**

Field trips

Getting to know classmates so well makes speaking in class easy!

Getting to know my professors and peers

Got comfortable with other students in it

Guidance and English

Guidance class because I actually learned a lot of information from Mr. Baker: very knowledgeable teacher and counselor

Having the same group of people

Having the same students

How we all come together like a family and get to know one another in the learning community. I wanted to learn more.

How you know almost everyone in your classes; more of how you come together and get to meet each individual and realize that we're all here to learn

I actually understood what I was doing and was able to ask for help: they would help me resolve my problem

I enjoy taking three classes that add up to 12 units. I like how they arrange the selection of classes we need in order to get by.

I enjoy the enjoyment of all the students and building bonds with students that help you out. In guidance class I learned a lot about myself and the teacher is great: a really good guy

I enjoy the Guidance 5 class because we have fun but we can learn at the same time. I didn't like English 70 because the teacher was so mean and boring.

I enjoy the Guidance 5 class the most. I like all the exercises we did in class. She makes us feel like we are all a family, and you get to know everybody in the class and all be friends.

I enjoy two classes (Guidance and Reading Lab) because they relate more to each other, but I hope I will enjoy it in the future.

I enjoyed every single minute that I was in this learning community. My classmates were really helpful and friendly. If it wasn't for their motivation, I really don't know where I would be right now.

I enjoyed everything in the learning community.

I enjoyed everything (2)

I enjoyed everything. The teachers were awesome! I loved the class on the Web (Etudes), the assignments: everything.

I enjoyed feeling comfortable with all other students.

I enjoyed getting to know other students and my teachers as well. I liked how some of the assignments were linked to each other.

I enjoyed having three classes with people I knew. The teachers were really friendly and helpful.

I enjoyed learning different styles of math. I did not know math was fun.

I enjoyed learning how to succeed in my classes and in life.

I enjoyed that we actually knew each other in class and felt free to talk to everyone if we needed help with anything.

I enjoyed the help of the teachers.

I enjoyed the teachers, and the classes are really helpful.

I enjoyed working with groups helping each other out.

I got to know everybody in the classes and it made school easier and more enjoyable knowing that I have some friends at school.

I had the same people in my class.

I like the learning community because I get to know a lot about myself. I also liked having the same classmates.

I like the students and teachers.

I like to talk with people.

I liked Mrs. Gillam even though she was absent most of the time. I enjoyed everything else, too.

**COMM 2. What did you enjoy most about the learning community? (Continued)**

I liked that I recognized the people who were in each of my classes and that we were somewhat familiar with each other. I felt somewhat less reluctant to approach them to ask for help when I had missed an assignment.

I love how close we got with each other. We became like a family.

I really enjoyed meeting new people and making friends. Last semester I didn't do good in my classes, and this semester I got extremely good grades.

I really enjoyed that we got along really well with our teachers and met a lot of new friends; aside from that, we were always motivated

I really enjoyed the bonding with the new people I met. I feel as if I actually learned something and never felt empty-handed about knowledge.

I really liked the environment; I liked meeting new people

Information that was provided to us

It made it easy to be able to do both speech and English papers because it was based on the same subject.

Keeping the same classmates made it easier to communicate and study.

Learning all kinds of things.

Making good friends and all the help that they provide: mainly all the help.

Making new friends that I know I will have contact with for a long time and the benefits I received from it

Meeting new people

Meeting new people and the help they offered

Meeting new people and working together with the other classes

Meeting new people; making great friends that I will always keep

Meeting people and building up confidence

More class interaction

My classmates were approachable.

My English teacher, Mrs. White: she brought English to life for me. I really like the way she taught the class: very caring teacher.

My instructor is very helpful and patient and is a friend.

Same people in all classes; sense of relaxation

Seeing the same students in all classes

So many opportunities have come along with this learning community. I like how they set you up with mentors and help you stay motivated. They push you to do better and to succeed, and they make sure you find that transferring to a university is possible for everyone!

Social interaction

Speech and English teachers

Talking to new people and learning new things

Teacher communication; less hectic workload; supportive staff; feeling welcome; class like a big family

Teachers are very helpful and organized.

Teacher linking together with the students.

That it felt like a family. We all knew what we had to do and students that did not go to one of the classes had others who would tell them what was to be done.

That it's not a big group of people.

That many people are actually here to help and they help you

That the same people have the classes

That we can talk to all the class and express our thoughts

The classes are interesting, especially Guidance.

The continuity of learning at the same time as a unit

The counseling and what I created with my guidance class and counselor.

The encouragement I get from my teachers as well as the people I have met

The environment with the community learning new things toward life

The fellow students that are on the same page

The field trips were cool, and Dr. White was an awesome teacher. I have learned many skills I am sure to use in the future as a student.

**COMM 2. What did you enjoy most about the learning community? (Continued)**

The friendship that I have with the students  
The group activities that we do in class; I liked having open discussions in class  
The help of the staff and the teachers  
The participation in giving back to the community; the happy faces on the non-English speaking migrant parents of the high school students when I helped them fill out a FAFSA form so their children would be able to afford an opportunity to attend a college!  
The people and the teachers  
The people around me; feeling comfortable  
The people, the family created and having that support  
The real world, real relationships with students and classmates; being successful academically  
The student and teacher involvement in our lives  
The students and the teachers  
The teachers  
The teachers and friends I made  
The teachers were very helpful.  
The way I had a chance to meet new people.  
Tight like family  
What I enjoyed most was learning about all the CSU and UC transfer requirements.  
What I learned was a lot of things. It was a great experience for me because it was my first time.  
Working one to one with an assistant  
Working with other students; asking for notes or their take on stuff  
Your class was the best, Sheila, and meeting everybody in class was great. They're really great peers and friends to me (helpful). I enjoy the lab as well.

No response (4)

### COMM 3. Any Other Comments

Add more general education courses  
Delta College is great.  
Everything was good.  
Guidance class rocks!  
I enjoyed it.  
I learned a lot about English. I was doing it all wrong before. Guidance was good to get me motivated.  
I like all of you. Hope we meet again.  
I like the learning community classes because it makes me gain social skills with others.  
I love Puente.  
I really enjoyed being in this class and would take it again.  
I really enjoyed the guidance class the most.  
I really enjoyed the learning community, the people.  
I think the learning community is a great thing.  
I think this learning community can still improve a lot.  
I wish and I hope I pass; I am a good person, but I had a lot of mishaps.  
I would like to say thank you for taking time to teach me all about the learning community. I feel it has changed the way I look at life.

I would do another learning community because I learn better in a smaller group. I would definitely recommend the learning community to all students.

I would strongly recommend this class to everyone.

I'm going to miss the teachers and classmates.

I've learned so much in the class, and I remember it more than when I was in high school. I love this class.

**COMM 3. Any Other Comments (continued)**

It's all really good.

Keep up the good work.

Learning community taught me attendance discipline because of the 'drop one, drop three' policy.

Mr. Graham, Mr. Rennicks and Mrs. Wang are my saving grace.

One thing I don't like is the English teacher, [instructor]. She helps less, but I totally respect her no matter what.

Overall, everything is pretty much good.

Puente is great, especially Mr. Canela: he is a great person who wants to see one succeed.

Puente rocks! Si se Puente! A puente unido nunca sera vencido! A Puente united shall never be divided!

Reading 91 seemed to be a bit overwhelming.

Thanks for being a great teacher and counselor. I didn't know you were my counselor until Mrs. A told me.

Thank you for a great semester!

The items checked with an asterisk did not include the learning community but rather AGS. My experience as an invited guest would bring me back to junior high school in dealing with the high society cliques that thought they were better than everyone. Otherwise I love Delta!

The learning community has helped in keeping my head in school work and helped me make friends in a diverse classroom.

The Puente project is a great program. I believe anyone and everyone can most definitely benefit from it. They should get a new English instructor, though: one that is there for the students.

The teachers were great.

They are cool teachers.

This experience was great.

This is my first learning community I've been in, and I would recommend it to anybody. I learned an extreme amount through this. It's been my best semester yet, and I will probably cry when it's over because I will miss it all.

Very good: I enjoyed this experience.

No response (68)

**APPENDIX D**  
**LEARNING COMMUNITY STUDENT SURVEY CODED OPEN-END RESPONSES**

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**QA8\_8. Reasons for Enrolling in a Learning Community, Other Specified**

**Accidentally registered for learning community**

Accident

Accidentally clicked

Didn't know I did

I didn't even know I was enrolled in a learning community

Just registered for one class and got other classes added

Mistake

**Wanted to meet/work with people (students, faculty)**

Get to know some more friends

To work with other students to gain confidence

Easier, more comfortable to know and work with the teacher and students

Support

**New student/Wanted to refresh memory and skills**

30 years out of school

First time at Delta

It's a good start for a first-time student

To refresh; getting back into school

Refresh memory

Wanted a refresh

**Other reasons**

Actually, English 1A and Communication Studies 1A were full at the time of class selection, so I took this, but I was so surprised at how wonderfully these classes work together!

Assessment scores

Didn't score high enough on test

Didn't want them but had to have them in order for me to be able to take English 79

English 70 for English 79 and English 1A

Experience and opportunities offered with the program

I am on double academic probation

I felt compelled to give back to the community whenever possible; the migrant conference gave me that opportunity

Really like William's Teaching!

Said it was a good opportunity

They put me in here

No response (4)

Not asked (75)

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

**Already satisfied/Nothing needs to change**

Basically at the learning center, the faculty and staff are efficient and beneficial.

I believe that everything is good to go.

I don't think I would change anything!

I don't know of anything that could be improved. Everything seems okay to me.

I don't know that there needs to be any improvements made. The learning community was very efficient.

**COMM 1. In your opinion, what could be done to improve the learning community?  
(Continued)**

**Already satisfied/Nothing needs to change (continued)**

I don't think anything can be done to improve the learning community. I think everything was done really well.

I like everything. They're doing really good.

I really have nothing that I would improve because I loved the learning community and the friends I made.

I think it is run very good.

I think that it is already good as it is, but if it improves in any way I think that it will still be the same.

I think the learning community is great the way it is.

I think the learning community is organized pretty well already.

I think they did a good job.

I like how the learning community already is. The only thing that could be improved is the care for the Kio pond.

If it is not broken, don't fix it.

It needs no improvement.

Nothing; it is already good.

Nothing; it's a good program.

Nothing; they're awesome. Big suggestion: offer more of them!

Nothing; I think the class was good. Even if you know the material already, they show better ways of doing it.

The real truth is that I think there's nothing I could do about it. I think the learning community is all really good.

Well, I think the learning communities did what they could to help the students.

**Teachers did a great job/Keep up the good work**

Continue to provide outstanding leadership in the role of the educators.

Delta College teachers do a great job of teaching. The teachers do not need to improve. I think they are great!

I like it the way it is. My instructors and students have been my saving grace.

My opinion is a biased one because I haven't been enrolled that long. As far as this first year, I am very pleased with the group of teachers and students.

Nothing. Mr. Baker is the best teacher. He covered any useful information well.

To succeed in a learning community, you need to be able to connect with the instructors, be able to say what you feel and state your opinions without being put down. The teachers are there to support and help you when you need help.

**Improve integration of courses**

Actually label the classes: easier to find communities.

Actually working together on assignments: the structure or transitions from paper to speech could be improved

Everything in the learning community went pretty well, but maybe library class should be on the same level as the other classes.

Get classes that fit better in the learning community.

Get the instructors to work together better and understand the work load that is required from each teacher for their students.

I think that the pace for everything in this class is good; maybe involve the guidance class a little more with the math class

Maybe work a little more on the arrangements on assignments.

Library class should be more correlated with the other two.

Library should correspond with the other two classes.

Like more class assignments together.

More integrated assignments between classes.

**COMM 1. In your opinion, what could be done to improve the learning community?  
(Continued)**

**Improve integration of courses**

Nothing: the learning community worked out very well, but more integrated assignments would have been a great way to be more prepared in my writing.

The communication between teachers; synchronizing all three classes, not just two; if one is online, all should be (even grade progression)

The library teacher was not really on point with the other two teachers.

Maybe the library class: make it easier to relate it and coordinate it better with the other two classes.

**Add more classes to the learning communities**

Add more courses to a learning community, such as general education classes.

Adding more classes to the learning community in my opinion would greatly improve it. We'd have more units to work with.

Give more units.

**Add more reading/writing/grammar assignments in class**

Do more reading and writing in class.

Use more class material that will need grammar and writing skills.

**Instructor issues/concerns**

Do not change the professor in the middle of the semester.

Do not have [instructor] as a teacher; she's [expletive deleted]; more time, less hardcore work [Instructor] needs to learn how to speak to people without putting everybody down every day.

Get a new English instructor that actually teaches his subject.

Get teachers that are more involved and actually make students feel comfortable rather than the opposite: teachers that are willing to help students, teachers that have more communication with each other

Have better instructors that can teach you what is needed in writing.

Have communication.

Have teachers that are willing to help the student: teachers that know what they are getting into.

**Instructor issues/concerns**

I think there is always room for improvement, such as the teacher and the learning material.

Maybe if [instructor] allowed you to email or talk to him to ask questions

More supportive teachers that are willing to work with each and every student if needed.

Our English instructor needs to be someone more involved with us.

Personally, I think what needs to be improved is the attendance of the teachers. That way we will improve our level and we will interact more with our classmates and teachers.

The teachers should communicate more so that they don't assign big projects at the same time.

Well, I think the program is great, but me personally, I had problems with the English instructor putting me down; but I stopped paying attention to the negativity. I think we need more alone time with the counselor.

**Need a learning community center/tutors/lab time**

For lab time there should be more teachers available to help students. Most of the time students wait a while before they are helped.

Have a study session.

Having a center for the learning community could really help.

I think we should be given the opportunity to have more lab hours.

More open classrooms, like the tutor center to work on homework and more tutors!

New English instructor!

**COMM 1. In your opinion, what could be done to improve the learning community?  
(Continued)**

**Scheduling issues**

I think the classes shouldn't be spread out like that because I get lazy to come back to school after my morning class.

One more day during the week added will be helpful.

The learning community can be improved by maybe having more students because some of the classes were small; have all the classes on either Monday, Wednesday and Friday or Tuesday and Thursday

**Student behavior/discipline issues**

I think the learning community was not a good idea. I got too comfortable with my classmates and goofed off a lot.

[I need to ] learn to focus better and not let other people get in the way of school.

[I need to] pay more attention and do more school/homework when due. Keep a positive attitude.

Discipline some of the talking students and make them separate in seating in class.

**Keep learning community classes together, not in forums**

Nothing; I really like it. Maybe if it is a learning community have only us in a class instead of a forum.

The only drawback of my learning community was the large size of my History 30B class. It did not really feel like a community because the class was mainly students who were not in the community.

**Need more help/time/individual attention**

More contact, counseling toward the students

More help: I have slow learning. It is hard for me to accomplish a task; I have lots of worries.

More time learning.

Talk to students more to find out their needs and what they really need help with.

**Other comments: Positive**

I learned to read to the class.

I don't know very much about how the learning community is supposed to operate. What I do know is that there is supposed to be a connection between three classes. One of the ways Ms. Robinson made this possible is by setting some class time aside to let us study for each of our history tests.

I like it the way it is, but to improve it, maybe we should have more class exercises in class, like talking all together and saying how we feel.

**Other comments: Positive**

I really like the learning community. You become close with those in your class and you help each other out a lot.

In my opinion, learning communities improved learning some things this year. I hope I will be improved next year.

More classes: in fact every course should offer a learning community. I really enjoyed it.

The guidance class was perfect: learned a lot about the UC and CSU systems and how they work. The English instructor was a nice guy but teaching-wise I didn't really learn anything.

**Other comments: Corrective**

For my English [class], the assignments online were confusing.

Get rid of library class

I'd like to have it with unrelated classes, too.

I did not like the library class. I think it could be improved.

I think it would be better if there were not so many assignments for reading; it makes me get backed up with homework.

**COMM 1. In your opinion, what could be done to improve the learning community?  
(Continued)**

**Other comments: Corrective (continued)**

In my opinion, the learning community can be improved by having more group discussions and class activities.

In my humble opinion, I would incorporate a math course in correlation with the English and counseling courses. Have the learning community participate in more events that benefit the students by providing resources that are not readily available. Allow the students to be empowered and more self-sufficient.

Less homework and more activities

Less homework

Make it so you do not have to drop all three classes; find more helpful students

Make this a two-year program to prepare us for the day we transfer; make this learning community open to students of other races, such as Caucasians, Filipinos, African Americans, etc.

Maybe [schedule] a meeting with the student and all three teachers to listen to input or improvements.

Tell people how the learning community can help in improving their lives and help in the long run with college and class.

No response (22)

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

**Sense of community/support**

Being able to ask one person for things I missed.

Being able to know the student "classmates" that were in the class with me. I wasn't really shy to talk with the same classmates in all my classes.

Classmates, meeting new people

Everyone knows each other

Everyone, everything all the time!

Everything! The people (friends I made), the professors, how the professors and students worked together so well

Felt very comfortable with teachers and classmates

Getting to know my professors and peers

Getting to know classmates so well makes speaking in class easy!

Got comfortable with other students in it

Having the same group of people

Having the same students

How we all come together like a family and get to know one another in the learning community. I wanted to learn more.

How you know almost everyone in your classes; more of how you come together and get to meet each individual and realize that we're all here to learn

I enjoyed feeling comfortable with all other students.

I enjoy the enjoyment of all the students and building bonds with students that help you out.

I enjoyed getting to know other students and my teachers as well.

I enjoyed working with groups helping each other out.

I got to know everybody in the classes and it made school easier and more enjoyable knowing that I have some friends at school.

I enjoyed having three classes with people I knew.

I enjoyed having the same people in each class. It makes it easier to get to know everyone and help build friendly relationships.

I enjoy how all three classes were together and the same students were in all three classes, just in case you missed a class. You can ask another student if they have the information in class.

I enjoyed my classmates sharing events and experiences they had. I knew several of my classmates by name and that made me more willing to ask questions without feeling terribly uncomfortable.

I enjoyed that we actually knew each other in class and felt free to talk to everyone if we needed help with anything.

I had the same people in my class.

I liked that I recognized the people who were in each of my classes and that we were somewhat familiar with each other. I felt somewhat less reluctant to approach them to ask for help when I had missed an assignment.

I like to talk with people.

I love how close we got with each other. We became like a family.

I really liked the environment; I liked meeting new people

I really enjoyed meeting new people and making friends. Last semester I didn't do good in my classes, and this semester I got extremely good grades.

I really enjoyed the bonding with the new people I met.

I enjoyed the connection with the learning community.

Keeping the same classmates made it easier to communicate and study.

Making good friends and all the help that they provide: mainly all the help.

Making new friends that I know I will have contact with for a long time and the benefits I received from it

Meeting new people

Meeting new people and the help they offered

Meeting new people and working together with the other classes

Meeting new people; making great friends that I will always keep

**COMM 2. What did you enjoy most about the learning community? (Continued)**

**Sense of community/support (continued)**

Meeting people and building up confidence

More class interaction

My classmates were approachable.

Same people in all classes; sense of relaxation

Seeing the same students in all classes

Social interaction

Teacher communication; less hectic workload; supportive staff; feeling welcome; class like a big family

That it felt like a family. We all knew what we had to do and students that did not go to one of the classes had others who would tell them what was to be done.

That many people are actually here to help and they help you

That the same people have the classes

That we can talk to all the class and express our thoughts

The environment with the community learning new things toward life

The fellow students that are on the same page

The friendship that I have with the students

The people, the family created and having that support

The people around me; feeling comfortable

The way I had a chance to meet new people

Tight like family

**Guidance class**

Guidance and English\*

Guidance class because I actually learned a lot of information from Mr. Baker: very knowledgeable teacher and counselor

I enjoy the Guidance 5 class because we have fun but we can learn at the same time. I didn't like English 70 because the teacher was so mean and boring.

I enjoy the Guidance 5 class the most. I like all the exercises we did in class. She makes us feel like we are all a family, and you get to know everybody in the class and all be friends.

In guidance class I learned a lot about myself and the teacher is great: a really good guy

I enjoy two classes (Guidance and Reading Lab) because they relate more to each other, but I hope I will enjoy it in the future,\*

The counseling and what I created with my guidance class and counselor.

The classes are interesting, especially Guidance.

Your class was the best, Sheila, and meeting everybody in class was great. They're really great peers and friends to me (helpful). I enjoy the lab as well.

**Enjoyed everything in the learning community**

I enjoyed everything in the learning community.

I enjoyed everything (2)

I enjoyed everything. The teachers were awesome! I loved the class on the Web (Etudes), the assignments: everything.

I enjoyed every single minute that I was in this learning community.

**The teachers**

I enjoyed the help of the teachers.

I enjoyed the teachers, and the classes are really helpful.

I like the students and teachers.

I liked Mrs. Gillam even though she was absent most of the time. I enjoyed everything else, too.

My English teacher, Mrs. White: she brought English to life for me. I really like the way she taught the class: very caring teacher.

My instructor is very helpful and patient and is a friend.

**COMM 2. What did you enjoy most about the learning community? (Continued)**

**The teachers (continued)**

Speech and English teachers

Teachers are very helpful and organized.

Teacher linking together with the students.

The encouragement I get from my teachers as well as the people I have met

The help of the staff and the teachers

The people and the teachers

The teachers

The teachers and friends I made

The teachers were really friendly and helpful.

The teachers were very helpful.

The student and teacher involvement in our lives

The students and the teachers

The field trips were cool, and Dr. White was an awesome teacher. I have learned many skills I am sure to use in the future as a student.

**Improved Learning**

Being part of something good; it feels great to be getting a little smarter

I actually understood what I was doing and was able to ask for help: they would help me resolve my problem

I enjoyed learning different styles of math. I did not know math was fun.

I feel as I actually learned something and never felt empty-handed about knowledge.

Learning all kinds of things

The real world, real relationships with students and classmates; being successful academically

What I learned was a lot of things. It was a great experience for me because it was my first time.

**More individual attention**

A lot of one-on-one time to break things down so we get the full understanding

All the math you can learn at your pace; how well the teachers and lab teachers can help you understand it

Working one to one with an assistant

**Self-reflection/Life skills**

I enjoyed learning how to succeed in my classes and in life.

I like the learning community because I get to know a lot about myself. I also liked having the same classmates.

**Improved motivation to succeed**

I really enjoyed that we got along really well with our teachers and met a lot of new friends; aside from that, we were always motivated

My classmates were really helpful and friendly. If it wasn't for their motivation, I really don't know where I would be right now.

So many opportunities have come along with this learning community. I like how they set you up with mentors and help you stay motivated. They push you to do better and to succeed, and they make sure you find that transferring to a university is possible for everyone!

**Linked courses/assignments**

I liked how some of the assignments were linked to each other.

It made it easy to be able to do both speech and English papers because it was based on the same subject.

**COMM 2. What did you enjoy most about the learning community? (Continued)**

**Collaborative/group learning**

Talking to new people and learning new things

The continuity of learning at the same time as a unit

The group activities that we do in class; I liked having open discussions in class

Working with other students; asking for notes or their take on stuff

**Other comments**

All the community service we did helped me network and meet a lot of successful people whom I can look up to. My teachers, Mr. Canela and Mr. Ramirez, really helped me become a better student, and they keep me motivated to do better.

Everything; the field trip but not coming back from the field trip

Field trips

I enjoy taking three classes that add up to 12 units. I like how they arrange the selection of classes we need in order to get by.

Information that was provided to us

That it's not a big group of people.

The participation in giving back to the community; the happy faces on the non-English speaking migrant parents of the high school students when I helped them fill out a FAFSA form so their children would be able to afford an opportunity to attend a college!

What I enjoyed most was learning about all the CSU and UC transfer requirements.

No response (4)

**COMM 3. Any Other Comments**

**Enjoyed the learning community/overall good experience**

Everything was good.

I enjoyed it.

I like the learning community classes because it makes me gain social skills with others.

I really enjoyed being in this class and would take it again.

I love Puente.

I really enjoyed the guidance class the most.

I really enjoyed the learning community, the people.

I think the learning community is a great thing.

It's all really good.

Keep up the good work.

Overall, everything is pretty much good.

The Puente project is a great program. I believe anyone and everyone can most definitely benefit from it. They should get a new English instructor, though: one that is there for the students.

Very good: I enjoyed this experience.

This experience was great.

Puente rocks! Si se Puente! A puente unido nunca sera vencido! A Puente united shall never be divided!

Puente is great, especially Mr. Canela: he is a great person who wants to see one succeed.

**Learned a lot in class**

I've learned so much in the class, and I remember it more than when I was in high school. I love this class.

I would like to say thank you for taking time to teach me all about the learning community. I feel it has changed the way I look at life.

Learning community taught me attendance discipline because of the 'drop one, drop three' policy.

**COMM 3. Any Other Comments (continued)**

**Would recommend learning communities to other students**

Add more general education courses

Delta College is great.

I would do another learning community because I learn better in a smaller group. I would definitely recommend the learning community to all students.

I would strongly recommend this class to everyone.

This is my first learning community I've been in, and I would recommend it to anybody. I learned an extreme amount through this. It's been my best semester yet, and I will probably cry when it's over because I will miss it all.

**Liked guidance class**

Guidance class rocks!

I learned a lot about English. I was doing it all wrong before. Guidance was good to get me motivated.

**Other comments**

I like all of you. Hope we meet again.

I think this learning community can still improve a lot.

I wish and I hope I pass; I am a good person, but I had a lot of mishaps.

I'm going to miss the teachers and classmates.

Mr. Graham, Mr. Rennicks and Mrs. Wang are my saving grace.

One thing I don't like is the English teacher, [instructor]. She helps less, but I totally respect her no matter what.

Reading 91 seemed to be a bit overwhelming.

Thanks for being a great teacher and counselor. I didn't know you were my counselor until Mrs. A told me.

Thank you for a great semester!

The items checked with an asterisk did not include the learning community but rather AGS. My experience as an invited guest would bring me back to junior high school in dealing with the high society cliques that thought they were better than everyone. Otherwise I love Delta!

The learning community has helped in keeping my head in school work and helped me make friends in a diverse classroom.

The teachers were great.

They are cool teachers.

No response (68)

**APPENDIX E**  
**FACULTY FOCUS GROUP/INTERVIEW GUIDE**

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**A: Introduction**

Thank you for joining us for our discussion today to talk about the learning communities here at Delta College. My name is Bri Hays, and I am a research analyst for Delta College's Title V programs and services. Dan Baker and I are working together to gather faculty and student opinions of and experiences with learning communities at the College. I will be the discussion facilitator today, so I will be asking you some questions and would like for you to share your thoughts about learning communities. The goal of our discussion session is to improve learning communities at the College.

We are going to treat this as a group discussion today, and I will be asking you a few questions about your experiences with the College's learning communities. I'd like you to talk about each question while I take notes on what you are saying. Please feel free to say whatever you think. There are no right or wrong answers, so please provide your honest opinion, even if it is different from someone else's point of view.

I want to hear everything you have to say, but I want to make sure that everyone who has something to say gets a chance to talk. We also need to cover all the questions I have, so please do not be offended if I have to end one discussion a bit abruptly. I will try to catch up with you later in the discussion if you have a point that you would like to discuss more fully. Once I've heard what you and other faculty have to say, I will be able to tell the learning community coordinator and Title V team how the program can be improved. I will be recording today's discussion so that I don't miss any of your thoughts or comments, and I will be preparing a report based on this discussion session for the learning community coordinator and Title V team. Please be assured that no comments will be linked to any one person, and no names will be included in the summary report.

Before we begin, let me mention a few ground rules for our discussion. Please speak up and just one at a time. I'll be taking notes so that I don't miss any of your comments, and it is difficult to hear what you say if everyone talks at once. I ask that you turn off your cell phones so that they do not interrupt our discussion. Our discussion will last about one hour. Let's start off by going around the room and introducing ourselves. Could each of you please tell me your name, your discipline, and how long you have been teaching a learning community course here at the College?

## B: Core Questions

Now we're going to talk a little bit about how you became involved with learning communities here at the College.

1. How did you find out about learning communities here at the College?
2. Why did you decide to teach courses in a learning community?

We're going to talk now about the training you received as a learning community faculty member.

3. Overall, how satisfied are you with the learning community training you received?
  - Is there any additional training that you would find useful?
4. What do you think about the tools and resources you were given?
  - Are there any other tools or resources that you would have found helpful?
  - Is there anything else that would have helped you prepare for a learning community course?

Now we're going to talk about your experience with learning communities this spring.

5. In general, how would you describe your experience teaching in a learning community this semester?
6. How would you describe learning communities to another faculty member?
  - a. What do you like best about your learning community courses? What do you like least?
  - b. Would you recommend learning communities to other faculty members? Why or why not?
7. How would you describe the process of linking curriculum in your learning community?
  - c. What worked well? What did not work well?
    - Did you link your course assignments with other learning community courses?
      - i. Did you find the linked assignments to be useful? Why or why not?
      - ii. How do students' linked assignments compare to non-linked assignments? Do you notice any difference in learning or academic performance?
  - d. Is there anything you would change about the way you linked curriculum and assignments to other courses?
8. Overall, as a faculty member, how satisfied are you with the learning communities process here at the College?
  - e. Was there anything that went particularly well? Anything that went particularly poorly?
  - f. Is there anything you would change?
9. Do you feel that you, as a faculty member, benefit from teaching in a learning community? Why or why not?
10. What do you think about team teaching a course with another faculty member?
  - g. What could be done to make team teaching successful?

Those are all the questions I have. Is there anything else that you would like to say about your experience with the learning communities here at the College?

Thank you again for your input, feedback and willingness to share your opinions and experiences. The ideas shared here today will help make our learning communities better for faculty and students in the future.

**APPENDIX F**  
**STUDENT FOCUS GROUP GUIDE**

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**A: Introduction**

Thank you for joining us for our discussion today to talk about the learning communities here at Delta College. My name is Bri Hays, and I am a research analyst for Delta College's Title V programs and services. Dan Baker, the learning community coordinator, and I are working together to gather student opinions of and experiences with learning communities at the College. I will be the discussion facilitator today, so I will be asking you some questions and would like for you to share your thoughts about learning communities. The goal of our discussion session is to improve learning communities at the College.

We are going to treat this as a group discussion today, and I will be asking you a few questions about your experiences with learning communities. I'd like you to talk about each question while I take notes on what you are saying. Please feel free to say whatever you think. There are no right or wrong answers, so please provide your honest opinion, even if it is different from someone else's point of view.

I want to hear everything you have to say, but also I want to make sure that everyone who has something to say gets a chance to talk. We also need to cover all the questions I have, so please do not be offended if I have to end one discussion a bit abruptly. I will try to catch up with you later in the discussion if you have a point that you would like to discuss more fully. Once I've heard what you and other students have to say, I will be able to tell the learning community coordinator and Title V team how the program can be improved. I will be recording today's discussion so that I don't miss any of your thoughts or comments, and I will be preparing a report based on this discussion session for the learning community coordinator and Title V team. Please be assured that no comments will be linked to any one person, and no names will be included in the summary report.

Before we begin, let me mention a few ground rules for our discussion. Please speak up and just one at a time. I'll be taking notes so that I don't miss any of your comments, and it is difficult to hear what you say if everyone talks at once. I ask that you turn off your cell phones so that they do not interrupt our discussion. Our discussion will last about one hour. Let's start off by going around the room and introducing ourselves. Could each of you please tell me your name, your major or academic program, and how long you have been a student at Delta College?

## B: Core Questions

Now we're going to talk a little bit about how you became involved with learning communities here at the College.

11. How did you find out about your learning community?
12. Why did you decide to enroll in the learning community?
  - What were your expectations for the learning community?

Now I'm going to ask you a bit about your experience with your learning community this spring.

13. In general, how would you describe your experience in your learning community?
14. From your perspective, how do your learning community courses differ from your regular courses?
15. How would you describe learning communities to another student?
  - What do you like best about your learning community?
  - What do you like least about your learning community?
  - Would you recommend learning communities to other students? Why or why not?

We're going to talk now about the courses and assignments in your learning community.

16. Overall, how satisfied are you with the courses in your learning community?
  - Do the courses go well together?
17. What do you think about the assignments in your learning community courses?
  - Have you completed any assignments that were linked between different learning community courses?
  - How do you feel about the linked assignments? How did they compare to non-linked assignments?

Now we're going to talk about your overall feelings about your learning community and the College.

18. Overall, what is your impression of your learning community?
  - Would you say you enjoyed learning community courses more, less or about the same as regular courses? Why?
  - How would you rate your learning community courses in terms of learning course material? How do they compare to regular courses?
19. Do you feel that you benefit in any way from participating in a learning community? How?
20. Overall, how would you describe your feelings about Delta College?
  - How supportive would you say the College overall is of your success?
  - How connected do you feel to...
    - other students at the College?
    - faculty here at the College?
  - Did your participation in a learning community make you feel more connected to the College? To other students?
21. Is there anything else the College could do to help you reach your academic or career goals?

Those are all the questions I have. Is there anything else that you would like to say about your experience with the learning communities here at the College?

Thank you again for your input, feedback and willingness to share your opinions and experiences. The ideas shared here today will help make our learning communities better for students in the future.