Fall 09 Basic Skills Learning Community Assessment of Impact

Overview of Demographics

A review of the demographics of the Fall 2009 Basic Skills Learning Community Cohort (as defined by all students who enrolled in one or more of the Fall 2009 Basic Skills Learning Community classes) identified the following:

- The ratio of females to males (64% compared to 36% respectively) was greater than the Fall 09 college-wide ratio of 56% to 44%.
- The average age of the learning community students (27) is comparable to the average age of the Fall 09 student population (26.7).
- A greater percentage of the learning community students were African American (64%) compared to the college-wide percentage of African American students (14.9%). This was paralleled by smaller percentages of Whites and Asian-Pacific Islanders in the Fall 09 Basic Skills Learning Community compared to college-wide enrollment trends (7% each compared to approximately 27% each).
- Close to 85% of the Fall 09 Basic Skills Learning Community students were in households that earned less than $30,000 per year, meaning that they were most likely low-income or living below the poverty level. This compares to a college-wide percentage of 55%.
- Approximately 65% of the Fall 09 Basic Skills Learning Community identified transfer as their long-term goal, which is greater than the percentage of students at the college (58%).

Student Progress and Success

The learning community did not appear to improve persistence rates of students. In particular, approximately 65% of the students who began in Fall 09 persisted until the next semester, which is slightly lower than college-wide persistence rates. Although the persistence from the second to the third semester increased to 72%, this improvement was not sustained as fewer than 50% of the learning community enrolled in Fall 2010 remained at the college in Spring 2011.
Note: During the course of this study, students had two semesters to enroll in Math 100. Some students who did not pass Math 30 the first time retook the class outside the learning community and then reenrolled in Math 100 within the learning community.

The learning community did not seem to improve course success rates in Math 30 or Math 100 (48% and 38% respectively compared to 59% and 47% college-wide). This difference, however, may be amplified by the relatively low number of students in the cohort who attempted Math 100 and may reflect some of the demographic differences noted previously. In addition, the learning community did not appear to improve the progression from Math 30 through Math 100, although it is not known whether some students enrolled in and passed a non-learning community Math 100 class.

Course success rates in Engrd 15 (83%) in the learning community were greater than the college-wide average course success rates in Engrd 15 (65%). However, participation in the learning community did not seem to increase subsequent enrollment or success rates in higher level reading courses, although it is possible that these courses were taken by students outside the learning community. In addition, the number of students enrolled in these courses is very small.
Course success rates in Engwr 51 (65%) were slightly below college-wide course success rates in Engwr 51 (71%). The small number of students in the cohort who enrolled in Engwr 101 and Engwr 300 limits the effectiveness of comparing the cohort success rates (33% and 66% respectively) with college-wide success course success rates (75% and 66%).

The percentage of students in the learning community with a GPA of 2.0 or higher decreased over time. Although 28 students in the cohort (55%) had a semester GPA greater than the historical CRC average GPA (2.6), this academic performance was not sustained over time. In particular, only eleven students (33%) were above the college-wide GPA in Spring 2010. Comparisons on successive semesters are hampered by the relatively low number of students in the cohort.