

ONLINE LEARNING COMMUNITIES' STUDENT SURVEY
HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2011-12 SURVEY ADMINISTRATIONS
AUGUST 2012

The Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education and Skagit Valley College's Institutional Research Office again expanded the national *Online Survey of Students' Experiences of Learning in Learning Communities* during the 2011-12 academic year. Twenty-seven (27) colleges and universities across the country participated—with many administering the survey in multiple terms—resulting in 4,279 responses. Fifteen of the institutions were community colleges, while the remaining 12 four-year institutions.

The respondents were enrolled in a variety of learning communities, with 73% in college-level, 15% enrolled in pre-college learning communities, and 12% in a learning community that combined pre-college and college-level courses. The majority of respondents (88%) were enrolled in common-cohort learning communities, that is, a learning community that combined two or more classes. Twelve percent (12%) were enrolled in a program that shared a common experience, such as a course, seminar or project.

Faculty activities or behaviors that were reported by students to happen often or very often included the following:

- 89% reported that their teachers encouraged them to ask questions in class.
- 87% reported that their teachers encouraged them to discuss assigned work in class.
- 86% of the respondents reported that their teachers made students feel comfortable about participating in class activities.
- 85% of the respondents reported that teachers made the goals, objectives, and vocabulary of learning communities clear.

Notably exceptional student outcomes or behaviors (responses of "Very Often" or "Often") included the following:

- 90% of the respondents reported their participation in a learning community helped them develop their ability to take responsibility for their own learning.
- 87% reported that in their learning community they were required to think critically and analytically often (36%) or very often (51%).
- A substantial majority of the respondents indicated that their participation in the learning community helped them to be successful in future courses and programs (86%), persist when faced with academically challenging work (82%), and identify the learning strategies that were most effective for them (80%).

At the other end of the spectrum, fifty percent (50%) reported they sometimes (43%) or never (9%) "ask questions in class." Forty-six percent (46%) of the respondents said they sometimes (31%) or never (15%) "work with classmates outside of class on course assignments, homework, or projects." Forty-one percent (41%) reported they

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sometimes or never “present my work, or work done as part of a group, to the class,” or discussed “ideas from this learning community with family members, co-workers, or other students.” Forty percent (40%) also reported that they only sometimes or never peer review their own or others’ work during class.

Several of the survey questions relate directly to integrative learning. The 2011-12 survey results indicate that 77% of the respondents often or very often work on connecting or integrating ideas, strategies or skills from their classes/disciplines included in the learning community, and a similar percent “reflect on how these connections lead to new insights or understanding” often or very often. Three-quarters of the respondents reported that their instructors often or very often demonstrated “how to integrate concepts and skills from different classes in a meaningful way” and a similar percent reported that their instructors often or very often assigned work “that asks me to connect concepts and skills from different classes to reach new understanding and/or applications.”

As noted in the table below, compared to their other classes, students in learning communities reported that they were slightly more likely to use analysis, synthesis, evaluation and integration, and to apply what they had learned to practical problems or new situations.

“In my learning community, compared to other classes, I spend more, less or about the same amount of time:”

	% Reporting “More”
Memorizing facts and figures	32.1
Analyzing elements of an idea, experience, or theory	54.2
Thinking through my assumptions	53.6
Synthesizing ideas, experiences, or theories	55.3
Evaluating information, methods, and arguments	54.5
Integrating ideas, strategies, and skills from multiple sources	54.7
Applying theories or concepts to practical problems or new situations	51.9

The *Online Survey of Students’ Experiences of Learning in Learning Communities* will be available again for administration in 2012-13. If you are interested in getting data for your learning communities for the upcoming fall term, contact Linda Vorthman at washcenter@evergreen.edu