

SURVEY OF STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES OF LEARNING IN LEARNING COMMUNITIES
HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2012-13 SURVEY ADMINISTRATIONS
JULY 2013

During the 2012-13 academic year, more institutions than in previous years administered the survey again expanded the online *Survey of Students' Experiences of Learning in Learning Communities* developed by the Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education and Skagit Valley College's Institutional Research Office. Thirty-six (36) colleges and universities across the country participated—with many administering the survey in multiple terms—resulting in 5,560 responses. Sixteen (16) of the institutions were two-year colleges, while the remaining 20 were four-year universities. Four-year institutions accounted for 60% of the 5,560 responses.

The students who responded were enrolled in a variety of learning communities, with 80% in college-level learning communities, 8% in pre-college learning communities, and 12% in a learning community that combined pre-college and college-level courses. The majority of respondents (81%) were enrolled in common-cohort learning communities, that is, a learning community that combined two or more classes. Nineteen percent (19%) 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 in their LC classrooms included the following:

- 89% reported that their teachers encouraged them to ask questions in class.
- 86% reported that their teachers encouraged them to discuss assigned work in class.
- 86% reported that their teachers made students feel comfortable about participating in class activities.
- 84% reported that teachers made the goals, objectives, and vocabulary of learning communities clear.

These percentages were similar to findings from 2011-2012.

Notable student outcomes or behaviors (responses of “often” or “very often”) included the following:

- 90% reported their participation in a learning community helped them develop their ability to take responsibility for their own learning.
- 86% reported that in their learning community they were required to think critically and analytically often (38%) or very often (47%).
- A substantial majority of the respondents indicated that their participation in the learning community helped them to be successful in future courses and programs (87%), persist when faced with academically challenging work (82%), and identify the learning strategies that were most effective for them (80%).

Again, these percentages were not substantially different from previous years.

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Forty-seven percent (47%) of the respondents reported they sometimes (41%) or never (6%) “ask questions in class,” an improvement over the prior year. As with previous years, nearly half the students reported that they sometimes (31%) or never (15%) “work with classmates outside of class on course assignments, homework, or projects,” and 44% reported that they only sometimes (32%) or never (12%) “peer review their own or others’ work during class.”

A number of the survey questions relate directly to integrative learning. The 2012-13 survey results are similar to results from prior years. They indicate that three-quarters 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 “reflect on how these connections lead to new insights or understanding.” In addition, 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 instructor 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 less likely to memorize facts and figures. They were more likely to use analysis, synthesis, evaluation and integration, and to apply what they learn 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	30%
Analyzing elements of an idea, experience, or theory	53%
Thinking through my assumptions	54%
Synthesizing ideas, experiences, or theories	53%
Evaluating information, methods, and arguments	54%
Integrating ideas, strategies, and skills from multiple sources	54%
Applying theories or concepts to practical problems or new situations	50%

These percentages are overall down slightly from the prior year.

The online *Survey of Students’ Experiences of Learning in Learning Communities* will be available again for administration in 2013-14. If you are interested in getting data for your learning communities for the upcoming academic year, contact Rachel Burke at washcenter@evergreen.edu