

LEARNING COMMUNITIES: LEARNER CENTERED ENVIRONMENTS

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Overview of Presentation

- Student development theory
- Learning community models
- Benefits
- Challenges
- Evaluation and assessment
- Carver College of Medicine case study
- Resources



Student Development in a Learner Centered Environment

- Active engagement increases student retention (Kuh, 1993)
- Communities provide opportunities for faculty and staff to challenge and support students (Sanford, 1962)
- Communities create connections (Astin, 1993)
- Learning community models in undergraduate settings:
 - Student cohorts
 - Linked courses
 - Coordinated study

Learning Community Models in Medical Schools

- Curriculum or student affairs application: colleges, docent groups, societies, communities
- Funding and other resources
 - Dean's support
 - Internal/external funding sources
 - Human resources
 - Physical structure
- Staffing: responsibilities and % time allocation
 - Professional staff and faculty roles
 - Centrally managed student affairs?
- Governance
 - Student leadership
 - Centrally managed learning communities
 - Faculty directed
- Sustainability

Benefits of Learning Community Model

- Provides support network for students, particularly those at-risk
- Vehicle through which curriculum can be delivered
- Educational partnership between students and faculty enhanced
- Potential for faculty development if used for delivery of the curriculum
- Longer-term relationship building
- Leadership opportunities for students and faculty
- Implementation can occur regardless of space

Challenges of Implementing Learning Community Model

- Culture and organizational change
- Sustaining participation in the clinical years
- Balancing leadership roles between faculty, staff and students
- Funding sources
- Physical space conducive to supporting community structure
- Recruiting and sustaining faculty involvement



Evaluation and Assessment

- Why assess the effectiveness of learning communities?
 - Improve student learning and outcomes (Kuh, 1993)
 - Dearth of educational scholarship
 - Sustainability
 - AAHE Assessment Principles of Good Practice (1992)
- Methods
 - Quantitative: surveys, observations, performance assessments, existing documents and reports
 - Qualitative: narratives

Carver College of Medicine Case Study

- Tenets on which communities were founded:
 - Support for student success through centrally managed counseling, mentoring and other services
 - Vertical integration encourages students to relate to upperclass students, faculty and staff
 - Model humanistic behavior and appreciation for diversity



Case Study continued

- Physical structure
 - Four learning communities
 - Study and informal gathering space
 - Integrated with traditional classrooms, computer clusters and clinical suites
- Staffing
 - Student leadership: mayor and council
 - Faculty director: 25% appointment
 - Curriculum/community coordinator: 100%
 - Secretarial support: 100%
 - Office of Student Affairs and Curriculum: centrally managed student services

Case Study continued

- Implementation timeline: marketing and buy-in
 - From virtual community to dedicated space
 - Administration, students, staff and faculty
- Integration with existing organization
 - Student government
 - Office of Student Affairs and Curriculum
 - STELLAR Model

Case Study continued

- Intentional programmatic enhancements
 - Service and service learning
 - Domestic Violence Intervention Program project
 - Food drives
 - Adopt-a-family
 - Leadership skill-building
 - Annual retreat
 - Skill building workshops
 - Toiling in the trenches

Case Study continued

- Educational programs
 - CPR training
 - Poetry readings
 - Human Rights week speakers
- Social activities
 - DOC Dash and all communities picnic
- Career and academic advising
 - Advisers and M1 mentor assigned through communities
 - "Why I love to specialize in..."
 - Career fair; M3 and M4 panels
- Mentoring
 - Individual community models
 - M3 mentoring program



Case Study: Outcomes

- 2004 graduating class first to spend all four years in learning communities
- Rosenbaum, Schwabbauer, Kreiter and Ferguson study (2005)
 - Increased student interactions outside of class
 - Increased participation in activities
 - 50% of respondents perceive that communities contribute to professional development and faculty interaction
 - M4s surveyed less clear on impact of communities

Outcomes continued

- Perceived benefits (Rosenbaum, et al., 2005):
 - Interaction with students outside of class
 - Opportunity for leadership, service and professionalism
 - Meeting and study space
 - Increased interaction with staff and faculty

Outcomes continued

- Challenges (Rosenbaum, et al., 2005)
 - Increase in time and scheduling conflicts related to community activities
 - Participation from upperclassmen and faculty
 - Preclinical students appear to benefit the most

Additional resources

- References
 - Astin, *What Matters Most in College: Four critical years revisited*. Jossey-Bass Publishing: San Francisco. 1993
 - Goldstein, et al., *Promoting Fundamental Skills: A Competency-based College Approach at University of Washington*. *Academic Medicine* (2005) 80:423-433
 - Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt and Associates. *Student Success in College*. Jossey Bass Publishing: San Francisco. 2005
 - Kuh, G. *Assessing Campus Environments* in Handbook of Student Affairs Administration, Barr and Associates (eds.) Jossey Bass Publishing: San Francisco. 1993
 - McDonald, W and Associates. *Creating Campus Community*. Jossey Bass Publishing: San Francisco. 2002
 - Sanford, N. *The American College*. Wiley Publishing: New York. 1962

Resources continued

- Websites:
 - www.medicine.uiowa.edu/osac/comminst/index.html
 - www.evergreen.edu/washcenter/project
- Interest group meeting at AAMC annual meeting;
- Medical schools currently using a learning community model: Case Western Reserve, Florida State, Harvard, Kansas, Loyola, UCLA, UMissouri-KC, U of WI, U of WA, Iowa

Summary

- Learner centered environment is supported by the learning community model
- There are many applications of learning community models, with and without dedicated physical space
- Each application has benefits and challenges
- Evaluation and assessment are important for measuring outcomes and sustainability
- Shared one model with you and provided resources for other models



Questions?