

Evolution of a College System Learning Community

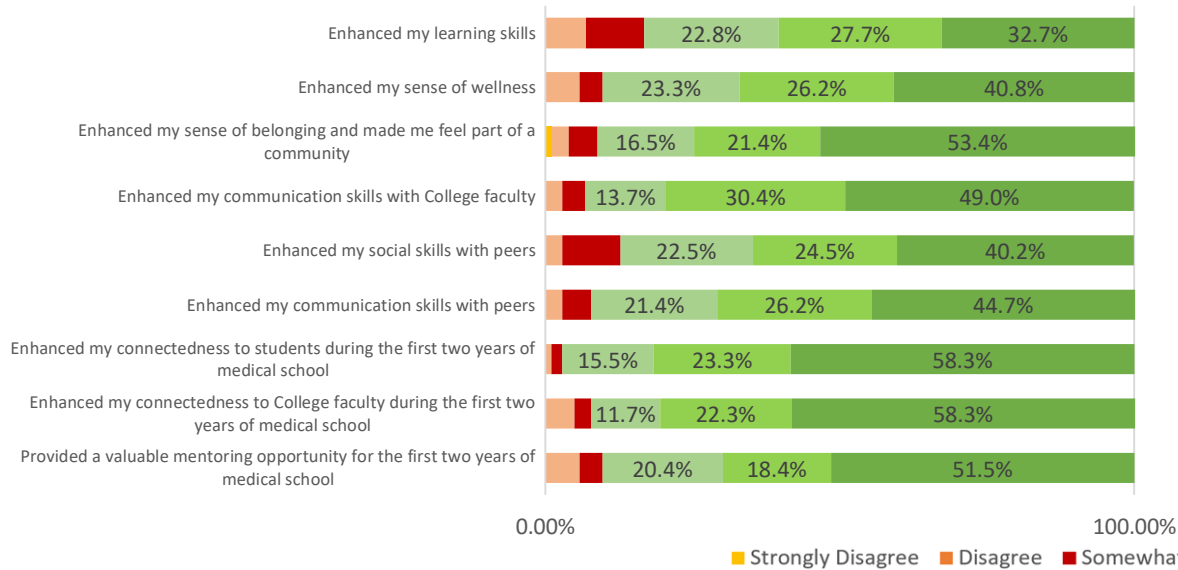
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Background
The medical education curriculum at the Paul L. Foster School of Medicine (PLFSOM) includes a College Colloquium Course and assignment of medical students to four College groupings. The Colleges serve as structured learning communities (LCs), providing students access to two faculty mentors per College, and a dedicated College suite for studying, socializing, and dining. The suites have lounge areas, kitchenette facilities and individual and student lockers. The College System consists of:

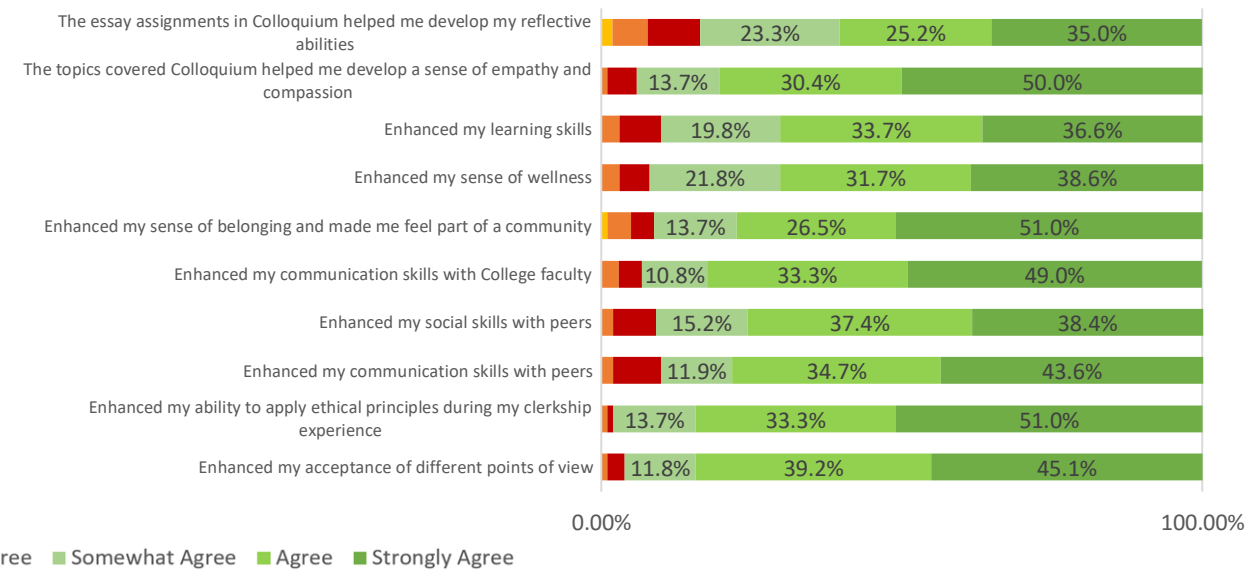
- The **College Colloquium Course**: weekly two-hour sessions, continuing through the first and second year of the MD program. The course is discussion-based with facilitation by the College Mentors and covers professionalism, ethics, empathy, humanism, wellness, leadership, and current topics in society and medicine. This allows students to ‘find their voice’, while developing ideas through spirited, respectful discourse.
- The **College Experience** includes social interactions in the College suites; College Cup events; and peer- and College faculty mentoring.

Program Evaluation and Results
We developed and administered a survey distributed to approximately 200 medical students during their 3rd and 4th years (Classes of 2020 and 2021), regarding their perceptions of the College System (CS). Survey response rate was 40% . Likert scales were used to measure satisfaction and agreement with CS benefits/gains. Additional open-ended questions assessed the overall impact students perceived. Quantitative analysis of Likert items revealed high levels of agreement with perceived CS benefits.

College Experience



College Colloquium Course



Main themes derived from the qualitative analysis of open-ended questions included: mentorship and connecting with both the college mentors and medical student peers, learning from others, an opportunity for growth, enhancing communication skills, benefiting from ethical discussions, having a sense of support and belonging, and providing an outlet and a comfortable setting.

Discussion & Conclusions

- Many medical schools have Learning Communities (LCs) with a broad heterogeneity in implementation and characteristics (Robert, et al. 2019).
- The PLFSOM LC framework is distinctive by both allocating students to smaller learning communities (Colleges) with their respective architectural units, and providing a dedicated discussion course.
- This study provides a broad overview of the impact of our College System LCs. The majority of our students agreed that both the College System LC experience and College Colloquium course brought value to their pre-clerkship training and contributed to their professional development. Thematic analysis of the open-ended questions also demonstrated a positive outlook towards the College System (CS).
- Areas for improvement, based on qualitative results, include expanding the CS to years 3 and 4 of the curriculum, and improving consistency across Colleges in terms of student experience (e.g. having college mentors rotate as guests in other colleges).
- This research regarding CS implementation furthers the understanding of the benefits of LCs and offers a blueprint to medical schools planning to start or modify similar LC curricular models.