Small group activities within academic communities improve the connectedness of students with faculty

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Curriculum changes in medical schools

Educate the next generation of physicians

Continuous curricular renewal

Goals:
- Learning communities
- Learner-centered curricula
- Team-based approach to healthcare
- Clinical skills early in the training
Outcomes of curricular changes

Academic outcomes:

- Increased\(^1\) or stable\(^2\) Step 1 and increased\(^1\) Step 2 performance
- Decrease in Step 1 failure rates\(^2\)


Outcomes related to social and psychological wellbeing:

• Increased faculty engagement\(^1\)
• Lower depressive symptoms\(^2\)
• Positive\(^2\) or stable\(^3\) learning environment

Conceptual framework

McMillan\(^1\): Sense of community theory

“feeling connected among community members”

McMillan\textsuperscript{1}: Sense of community theory

Elements that build a sense of community:

- Membership
- Influence
- Integration
- Emotional connection

\textsuperscript{1}Mcmillan DW, and Chavis DM. Sense of Community - a Definition and Theory. \textit{J Community Psychol} 14: 6-23, 1986.

all exemplified though the Academic Communities
Aims of the study

• To investigate the impact of a curriculum change on students’ connectedness among themselves and with faculty and the resulting sense of community.

• To determine which element of the curriculum change most contributed to their connectedness and sense of community.
Goals of the curriculum change at UCSD SOM

- Increased small group activities
- Reduction in lecture hours
- Introduction of six academic communities
- More clinical activity in pre-clerkship years
Curriculum change at the UC San Diego SOM

MS1 and MS2 instructional hours were analyzed together.
Curriculum change at the UC San Diego SOM

Old curriculum

New curriculum

% of total instructional hours

- Lecture
- Small group
- Laboratory
- Large group problem solving
- Clinical preceptorship
- Video/online material
Curriculum change at the UC San Diego SOM

- Ad hoc
- AC (Longitudinal SG)
- PBL

- Old Curriculum
- New Curriculum

Hours:
- 0
- 100
- 200
- 300
Effects of the curricular change on students’ connectedness with faculty

n = 904, MS1 and MS2 were analyzed together unless otherwise noted
Longitudinal small group activities contribute most to students’ connectedness with faculty.

n = 153, MS1 and MS2 were analyzed together
Effects of the curricular change on students’ connectedness among themselves

n = 904, MS1 and MS2 were analyzed together unless otherwise noted
Small group activities contribute most to students’ connectedness among themselves

n = 153, MS1 and MS2 were analyzed together
Conclusion

• Increased small group activities enhances students’ connectedness with faculty
• Longitudinal small group activities within academic communities are most contributing to students’ connectedness with faculty
• Students’ connectedness among themselves was high baseline and did not significantly change
Acknowledgments

• Dr. Carolyn Kelly, UCSD
• Dr. Jess Mandel, UCSD
• Stephen Schneid, UCSD
• Dr. Sunny Smith, UCSD
• Dr. Babbi Winegarden, UCSD