

Evaluation of Learning Communities by Pre- and Post-Curriculum Reform Classes

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Introduction

In 2007, The Ohio State University College of Medicine created Learning Communities (LCs). Each class is divided into groups of 12 and meets 4-6 times per year with a faculty member for four years. Most meetings occur over dinner, often off-campus in the faculty's home or a restaurant. Topics include personal and professional development and sociopolitical topics. Topics are chosen by the group.

In 2012, Ohio State started its Lead Serve Inspire (LSI) Curriculum, and we sought to analyze the differences in LCs between this first-year class and the previous one. Our hypothesis was that the two classes would be different based on the students and their first-year experiences. As anatomy groups were not a major focus of the first few weeks, LCs were randomly assigned rather than formed from anatomy groups as they had been previously.

We conduct an ongoing IRB-approved analysis of the impact of the LCs. Students are surveyed confidentially upon entry and at the end of each year regarding empathy, burnout and other factors. At the end of each year they also answer questions specific to Learning Communities, which are presented here.

Methods

At the end of the first year for each class, we analyzed survey responses regarding medical students' opinions of the LC program and their own groups. Chi-square was computed for discrete variables and t-tests used for continuous variables.

Students were assigned to groups by pairing anatomy groups in the pre-LSI cohort and by random assignment in the LSI cohort. Therefore, in the LSI group the LC was the only interaction students had with that particular group. Additionally, anatomy groups had been balanced for gender, whereas random assignment resulted in some groups that were gender imbalanced.

Response Rates

Pre-LSI = 64%	Consent	No Consent [^]
Survey Completed	153*	37
Survey Not Completed	61	20

*Included in study
[^]No consent = not completed or declined

LSI = 64%	Consent	No Consent [^]
Survey Completed	114*	9
Survey Not Completed	51	3

*Included in study
[^]No consent = not completed or declined
 14 Students repeating Med 1 were not included

Results

Both groups had consistent opinions of frequency of meetings (78% and 79% "about right"), and the size of the group (12 students) (93% and 91% "about right"). They met a similar number of times (7.8 and 8.0 meetings/year), and a similar number of times off-campus (6.5 and 6.6 meetings/year).

Students in the LSI group were more likely to feel they met off-campus "too often" (7% pre-LSI vs. 15% LSI, $p < .03$).

Pre-LSI students were more likely to study with other members of their LC (46% vs. 28%, $p < .002$) and report the quality of their interaction with their classmates in the group was high ($p < .02$).

In questions of group cohesion, the LSI group rated their belonging ($p < .006$) and morale ($p < .002$) in the group lower than the pre-LSI group.

Learning Community Cohesion

- I feel that I belong to this learning community group
- I see myself as part of this learning community group
- I feel that I am a member of this learning community group

	Mean(SD)	t	P
Pre-LSI	16.77 (3.84)	2.75	< 0.006
LSI	15.31 (4.25)		

Scale = 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree)

Learning Community Cohesion Morale

- I am happy to be part of this learning community group
- This learning community group is one of the best anywhere
- I am content to be part of this learning community group

	Mean(SD)	t	P
Pre-LSI	16.78 (3.79)	3.16	< 0.002
LSI	15.03 (4.71)		

Scale = 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree)

Discussion

LSI students would prefer to meet off-campus less often and felt less cohesion with their groups. Whether this is caused by differences in the students, the leaders, the groups or the curricula is unclear.

Lessons Learned

For 2013-2014, groups were stratified for gender and for an even distribution of the under-represented minorities within the class.

For 2013-2014 LC leaders of Med 1 and Med 3 groups participated in a workshop on leading diverse groups and a handout of "ground rules" for group discussion shared with all leaders.

This data will be compared again at the end of 2013-2014, and the groups for 2014-2015 will again be gender and minority balanced.

Further Information

Contact Info:



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