

Request for Title III Grant

Project Description: Learning in a Learning Community

Four faculty teaching four different classes are involved in a University Express Learning Community for Fall 2007: Mike DeUnamuno, PD 113; Alison Kuehner, English 163; Carmen Madden, English 151B; and Teresa Massimo, Speech 101. Although University Express learning communities have been offered in the past, the faculty involved are all new to this learning community and to the University Express approach. Moreover, most all the students in these classes are new to the college and to learning communities.

In our learning community, we'd like to make the idea being in a learning community one of the themes of the course. For instance, we would encourage students to become aware of the advantages and disadvantages of being in a learning community, ask them to reflect on the connections between their work in their various learning community courses, and to develop strategies that use the learning community (other students and faculty) to increase their success in their classes.

Moreover, we will also encourage students to see the connections among their classes—for instance, how in a reading class they will need to locate the author's thesis in a piece of reading; in a writing classes they will need to state a clear thesis in their own essays, and in a speech, they will need to present orally a clear thesis. The study skills strategies they learn in their personal development class (such as how not to procrastinate!) can be put to immediate when completing assignments in their reading, writing, and speech classes.

Project Outcomes:

- students will become more aware of the advantages and disadvantages of being in a learning community and will develop individual strategies for improving their success in their learning community
- students will be able to articulate how they can transfer the advantages of being in a learning community to non-learning community classes they might take in the future
- students will be able to make connects and apply skills they have learned in one class to another

Assessment Strategies:

Each faculty in the learning community will implement a strategy to help students understand their place in the learning community. (See implementation timeline below.) For instance, in the reading class students will be given an introductory and concluding survey asking about their experiences in the learning community, in the writing class students will keep a weekly journal to reflect on the connection among their learning community classes, in the speech class students will give a speech about being in a learning community, and in the personal development class students will develop a study plan incorporating the advantages of a learning community. Each activity will be designed by the instructor to make students more aware of how they can use the learning community to their academic advantage.

Project Implementation Timeline:

Beginning of semester:

- Survey students in the learning community to find out why they enrolled in a learning community and what advantages or disadvantages they anticipate being a part of this group. (survey to be administered in English 163)

During semester:

- Students will reflect on their experience of being in a learning community by keeping a weekly journal (journal to be assigned in English 151B)
- Students will use study strategies that take advantage of being in a learning community (study strategy techniques to be coordinated in PD 113)
- Students will give an oral presentation about their experience being in a learning community (presentation to be given in Speech 101)
- Students will be encouraged to see the connections among the various skills and strategies they are learning in their different courses (in all courses)

End of semester:

- Survey students in the learning community to help them reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of being in a learning community and how they might carry over those advantages when they are in other non-learning community classes. (survey to be administered in English 163)

Faculty Responsible for Development and Implementation:

Mike DeUnamono, Counselor

Alison Kuehner, Professor of English

Carmen Madden, Assistant Professor of English

Teresa Massimo, Assistant Professor of Speech