A Mixed-Method Approach to Evaluating Themed Learning Communities

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Themed Learning Communities (TLC Retreat)
April 1, 2011
Indianapolis, Indiana
Presentation Overview

• Assessment Methods

• Assessment Results
  – Retention & Graduation rates
  – Grade Point Average
  – Student Engagement
  – Satisfaction & Self-Reported Learning Gains
  – Qualitative Responses

• Implications & Next Steps
2010 TLCs Program Offerings: 32 Sections

- Liberal Arts (6)
  - Transcending Perceptions
  - Writing Women Back Into (Her)story
  - International Perspectives

- Engineering (3)
  - Global Views Local Solutions
  - Motorsports

- Science (3)
  - CSI: IUPUI
  - Sustaining Happiness? Psychology & Religion

- Education (3)
  - Social Justice Past & Present

- Nursing (3)
  - So, You Think You Want to Be a Nurse

- Business (2)
  - Classroom to Boardroom

- Public & Environmental Affairs (2)
  - Dangerous Minds, Dangerous Policies

- Herron School of Art (1)
  - Ways of Seeing Art & Culture

- Social Work (1)
  - Smart Helpers of the World

- Physical Education (1)
  - Fit N’ Healthy

- University College (8)
  - For Love AND Money
  - Athletes
  - African American Perspectives
  - Multicultural Perspectives
  - Health Professions Programs
Assessment Methods

• Employ Mixed-Method designs using qualitative and quantitative methods.
• Attempt to understand how TLCs influence students’ success levels (e.g., retention rates, GPAs).
• Administer end-of-course questionnaires (designed to provide information on students’ perceptions of course benefits, learning outcomes, satisfaction levels, why decided to enroll)
• Conduct focus groups and individual interviews.
• Collect direct measures of student learning (e.g., Integration and Application of Knowledge embedded course assessment as part of the 2012 Reaccreditation efforts)
Mixed-Method Approaches

• Allows researchers to:
  – Triangulate findings from multiple sources.
  – Converge or corroborate findings.
  – Strengthen the internal validity of the studies.
  – Create elaborated understandings of complex constructs such as “engagement” or “integrative learning.”
National Literature

• Learning communities have been advocated as effective interventions for enhancing:
  – Student Retention (Tinto, 2003)
  – Engagement levels (Yancy, Sutton-Haywood, Hermitte, Dawkins, Rainey, and Parker, 2008; Zhao and Kuh, 2004),
  – Student learning and academic success (Hegler, 2004; Henscheild, 2004; Kuh, 2008; Stassen 2003),
  – Opportunities for service learning (Oates and Leavitt, 2003),
High Impact Practices

“When I am asked, what one thing we can do to enhance student engagement and increase student success? I now have an answer: make it possible for every student to participate in at least two high impact activities during his or her undergraduate program, one in the first year, and one taken later in relation to the major field. The obvious choices for incoming students are first-year seminars, learning communities, and service learning” (George Kuh, 2008)
TLCs and Retention

“While improved retention is a welcome consequence of learning-community work, it has never been its aim. In the push to improve student retention, it is easy to overlook what research tells us: Students persist in their studies if the learning they experience is meaningful, deeply engaging, and relevant to their lives” (Lardner & Malnarich, 2008)
## Impact on First Year Retention

### 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Students</th>
<th>Retention Rate*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TLC Participants</td>
<td>338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-TLC Participants</td>
<td>1211</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comparison group – students who participated in a freshman seminar or learning community.

*Retention. Adjusted to control for significant covariates including: course load, gender, ethnicity, SAT scores, high school percentile ranks, units of high school math, and first-generation students.

### 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Students</th>
<th>Retention Rate*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TLC Participants</td>
<td>377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-TLC Participants</td>
<td>1779</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Students</th>
<th>Retention Rate*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TLC Participants</td>
<td>565</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-TLC Participants</td>
<td>1690</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bolded items are significant p<.01
# Impact on First Year Retention

### 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th># of Students</th>
<th>Retention Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TLC Participants</td>
<td>626</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-TLC Participants</td>
<td>1813</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comparison group – students who participated in a freshman seminar or learning community.

### 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th># of Students</th>
<th>Retention Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TLC Participants</td>
<td>737</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-TLC Participants</td>
<td>1580</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* items are significant p<.01

### 2010 (fall to spring)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th># of Students</th>
<th>Retention Rate*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TLC Participants</td>
<td>684</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-TLC Participants</td>
<td>1467</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significant based on a logistic regression procedure with age, gender, ethnicity, SAT scores, high school GPAs, and Summer Bridge Participation entered as covariates in the first step of the model.
Why Not Significantly Higher One-Year Retention Rates for TLC 2008 and 2009 Cohorts?

• UC programs and interventions designed to enhance retention and degree attainment have been expanded for all students in the past few years positively affecting campus-wide retention rate: Intrusive Advising, PDP, Peer Mentoring, Summer Bridge, Summer Success Academy, etc.

• Most students in the “comparison group” participated in some program or intervention designed to improve retention.

• Notable variation in one-year retention rates between sections ranging from 52%-100% in Fall 2009 (variation not just due to the academic preparation of the students).

• Compared to Fall 2007, 2009 TLC students had significantly lower levels of satisfaction in the areas of applying knowledge to broader social issues, making connections with faculty outside of class, and discussing connections with faculty.
Indianapolis First-Time, Full-Time Cohort Retention  
TLC Participants vs. Non-Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 year</th>
<th></th>
<th>2 years</th>
<th></th>
<th>3 years</th>
<th></th>
<th>4 years</th>
<th></th>
<th>5 years</th>
<th></th>
<th>6 years</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
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<td>%</td>
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<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial Totals</td>
<td></td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
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<td>----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TLC Partic</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TLC Non-Partic</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2155</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>----------</td>
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<td>----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2003 Cohort</td>
<td></td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TLC Partic</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TLC Non-Partic</td>
<td>1833</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2086</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Graduation figures include bachelor's, associate degrees, and certificates awarded. Retained includes students awarded a degree or certificate or students who have re-enrolled.
## Impact on GPA

### 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Adjusted GPA*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TLC Participants</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>2.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Participants</td>
<td>1026</td>
<td>2.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comparison group – students who participated in a freshman seminar or learning community.

*G.P.A. adjusted to control for significant covariates including: course load, gender, ethnicity, SAT scores, high school percentile ranks, units of high school math, and first-generation students.

### 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Adjusted GPA*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TLC Participants</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>2.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Participants</td>
<td>1324</td>
<td>2.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Adjusted GPA*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TLC Participants</td>
<td>535</td>
<td>2.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Participants</td>
<td>1499</td>
<td>2.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bolded items are significant $p<.01$
## 2008 Themed Learning Community Impact on First-Year GPA: ANCOVA Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Avg. Cumulative GPA</th>
<th>Avg. Cumulative GPA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TLC</strong></td>
<td>590</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>2.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non Participants</strong></td>
<td>1577</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>2.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall</strong></td>
<td>2167</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note 1:** Bolded items are significantly different based on ANCOVA Results ($p < .05$). Covariates included the following: H.S. GPA, SAT score, and gender.

**Note 2:** Comparison group includes only students enrolled in First-Year Seminars. Students who were Administratively Withdrawn or Withdrew are excluded.
## 2009 Themed Learning Community Impact on Fall Semester GPA: ANCOVA Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Avg. Fall GPA</th>
<th>Avg. Adjusted Fall GPA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TLC</td>
<td>695</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>2.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non Participants</td>
<td>1403</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>2.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>2198</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note 1**: Bolded items are marginally significantly different based on ANCOVA Results ($p = .06$). Covariates included the following: H.S. GPA, SAT score, First-Generation, and gender.

**Note 2**: Comparison group includes only students enrolled in First-Year Seminars. Students who were Administratively Withdrawn or Withdrew were excluded.
### 2010 Themed Learning Community Impact on Fall Semester GPA: ANCOVA Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Avg. Fall GPA</th>
<th>Avg. Adjusted Fall GPA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TLC</td>
<td>683</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>2.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non Participants</td>
<td>1465</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>2.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>2148</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note 1:** Bolded items are significantly different based on ANCOVA Results ($p < .001$). Covariates included the following: H.S. GPA, SAT score, gender, ethnicity, First-Generation, and Summer Bridge Participation.

**Note 2:** Comparison group includes only students enrolled in First-Year Seminars. Students who were Administratively Withdrawn or Withdrew were excluded.
## Hierarchical Regression Results: Program Type and Fall 2008 Semester GPA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Unstandardized Beta Weight</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Standardized Beta Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.S GPA</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.43*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.06*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.09*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.S GPA</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.43*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.06*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.09*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEMINAR</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.10*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LC</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.12*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TLC</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.16*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB-TLC</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.11*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WK SB</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>-.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONLINE</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>-.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$R^2 = .22$ for Step 1: $\Delta R^2 = .018$ for Step 2 (p < .001). *p < .05
## Hierarchical Regression Results: Program Type and Fall 2010 Semester GPA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Unstandardized Beta Weight</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Standardized Beta Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.S GPA</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIRST GEN</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.S GPA</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.39**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.13**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.06**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIRST GEN</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-.06**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB-TLC</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.10**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TLC</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.09**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.04*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LC</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONLINE FYS</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>-.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO PROGRAM</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( R^2 = .24 \) for Step 1; \( \Delta R^2 = .018 \) for Step 2 (p < .001).  **p<.01, * p<.10
Limitation

• A noteworthy limitation of these investigations is that students self-select into TLCs and selection bias may have affected the internal validity of this study. Thus, the ability to make causal inferences based on the information is limited.

• It is possible that the positive effects of TLCs on academic performance are due to the fact that students who decide to enroll may have differed in substantial ways from students who decided not to enroll and these differences (not TLCs) may have caused the positive outcomes.

• Although important variables were treated as covariates in the statistical models, it is difficult to adjust for all possible self-selection factors using traditional statistical techniques and when experimental designs using random assignment are not employed.
2008 National Survey of Student Engagement

Significant differences between TLC students (144) in comparison to IUPUI non-TLC students (375) and notably different compared to NSSE Peer Institutions group:

**Diversity**
- Included diverse perspectives in class discussions or writing assignments
- Institutional emphasis on encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds
- Tried to better understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from his or her perspective
- Had serious conversations with students who are very different from you in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values
- Learned something that changed the way you understand an issue or concept

**Interdisciplinary Learning**
- Put together ideas or concepts from different courses
- Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources

**Service & Out of Class Learning**
- Worked with classmates outside of class
- Participated in a community-based project
- Community service or volunteer work

**Academic Challenge**
- Worked harder than thought they could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations
- Made class presentations

**Supportive Campus**
- Overall higher quality of relationships with other students
- Overall higher quality of academic advising
- More institutional emphasis on providing the support students need to help them thrive socially
NSSE Benchmarks: TLC Students Higher than IUPUI Students and Peer Institutions

• Active and Collaborative Learning
• Enriching Academic Experiences
TLC Questionnaire Results 2010 (N = 640)

• 73% reported that they were “Satisfied” or “Very Satisfied” with their TLC Experience.
• 64% reported that they participated in a community service or volunteer activity.
• 76% reported that they participated in a campus activity or event outside of class.
• 55% reported that they participated in an activity or event in the Indianapolis community.
• 61% reported that they understood connections between different disciplines and courses “Much” or “Very Much.”
• 54% Developed a better understanding of complex real world social problems and issues “Much” or “Very Much.”
Which Course Components Make Significant Impact on Student Satisfaction With Learning Experiences?

• Integration and Application of Knowledge
  – Applied what I learned in one course to another course in my learning community
  – Understood connections between different disciplines and course
  – Applied knowledge gained in learning community courses in service to the broader community and social issues

• Peer Interactions
  – Discussed ideas from the TLC courses with peers outside of class.
  – Exchanged ideas with student whose views are different from my own.
  – Formed one or more friendships that I will maintain after the semester.

• Critical Thinking
  – Became more effective in analyzing and understanding readings in essays, articles, and textbooks
  – Developed a better understanding of complex real world social problems and issues
  – Actively discussed complex issues and ideas
### Top 5 Self-Reported Benefits of 2009 TLCs Rank-Ordered by Mean Value

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formed one or more friendships that I will maintain after the semester.</td>
<td>560</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understood connections between different disciplines and courses</td>
<td>562</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchanged ideas with student whose views are different from my own.</td>
<td>560</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied what I learned in one course to another course in my learning community.</td>
<td>563</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Became more effective with communicating my thoughts in writing.</td>
<td>561</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Self-Reported Benefits of 2010 TLCs Rank-Ordered by Mean Value (N=640)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formed one or more friendships that I will maintain after the semester.</td>
<td>640</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchanged ideas with student whose views are different from my own.</td>
<td>639</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understood connections between different disciplines and courses.</td>
<td>640</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Became more effective with communicating my thoughts in writing.</td>
<td>641</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actively discussed complex issues and ideas.</td>
<td>636</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Lowest Rated Items Related to Making Connections with Faculty (2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Made connections with faculty outside of class.</td>
<td>639</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussed connections between any TLC courses with faculty.</td>
<td>636</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Qualitative Results

• Examinations of Students’ Open-ended Responses to TLC Program Questionnaire.
• Allows for us to understand students’ Thoughts & Perceptions in Their Own Words.
• Coding Process (Straus & Corbin, 1990) used in conjunction with ATLAS.ti
• More Information on Methodology Available – Please feel free to contact me with questions.
ATLAS.ti

http://www.atlasti.com/
Other Software Programs:
http://www.eval.org/resources/QDA.htm
ATLAS.ti

Creating a Hermeneutic Unit

Assigning Primary Documents

Discovering relevant passages

Creating code(s) and memos

Building theory: Weaving concepts to networks

Visualizing & Writing up results

Exporting data

SPSS
PROLOG
HTML
XML

New text is imported whenever needed
Results

• Focuses on two (2) main questions:
  – How TLC Experiences Contributed to Learning:
  – Suggestions for Improving the TLC Program:

• Qualitative Data is very *Rich* – Goal is to provide immediate *feedback*.

• For Example – Analyzed – 2,933 Student Comments.

• Comprehensive Report is Available.
“Please describe how your TLC experience contributed to your learning:” (n = 585)
Major Themes

• Meeting Friends & Developing Connections (13%).
• College Transition Assistance (11%).
• Increased Critical Thinking Skills (10%).
• Became Familiar with Campus Resources (10%).
• Developed Peer Support Network (10%).
• Helpful – Linked Courses (9%).
• More Confident & Comfortable (7%).
• Study, Time, Stress Management (7%).
• Application of Knowledge (6%).
Meeting Friends & Developing Connections

• “Good for meeting new friends.”
• “Making new friends and being connected has helped grades.”
• “I met people that I had in other class and was more comfortable.”
• “The TLC experienced helped me build friendships which allowed me to form study groups.”
• “It helped me established friendships with people in my major.”
• “I was forced to make connections between classes; I became friends w/ students who shared & countered my viewpoints.”
College Transition Assistance

• “Helped me transition into college.”
• “Help smooth freshman transition.”
• “Helped me adjust to the college lifestyle.”
• “It helped me transition to college life more easily and successfully.”
• “Made me more comfortable with the transition from high school to college.”
• “It made my transition to college so much easier. I felt very prepared and learned a lot.”
Increased Critical Thinking Skills & Application of Knowledge

• “Helped me organize my ideas.”
• “I found a better way to relate myself to my studies.”
• “It helped me look at things from other perspectives.”
• “Helped me link my ideas from one class to another and think of things in different ways.”
• “TLC contributed to my learning by providing a community for questions and broadening my comfort zone.”
Developed Peer Support Network

• “My TLC allowed me to effectively get better grades in my courses by giving me people to rely on when I have a question or problem.”
• “I made better connections with people whom guided me in subjects I was struggling in.”
• “It really helped me get more involved in the class knowing my TLC on a more personal level.”
• “It helped me find people to bounce ideas off of so that I can find a way to effectively study.”
“What specific suggestions do you have for improving the Themed Learning Communities”: (N = 541)
Major Themes

- N/A, None, Nothing (26%).
- More Program Organization & Communication (13%).
- Improve or Cancel Specific Course or Component (11%).
- More “Outside” Class Activities (Field Trips) (9%).
- General Positive Comment (7%).
- More Group Activities & Discussions (7%).
- More Faculty Support (6%).
- Improve Course “Linkages” (6%).
More “Outside” Class Activities (Field Trips)

• “More out of class activities.”
• “More field trips.”
• “Get out of the classroom more.”
• “More community activities in outside area.”
• “To make students do more service work throughout the semester. 1 volunteer visit normally isn't enough to affect a person.”
Improve Course “Linkages”

• “Discussing the connections more between classes.”
• “I would like to see more projects connected throughout the classes.”
• “I would discuss the connections between classes more explicitly.”
• “Draw the courses in closer by creating projects that require work from multiple classes.”
• “The teachers should work together & collaborate like they're supposed to.”
More Faculty Support

• “Making sure ALL teachers actively participate.”
• “Have the teachers collaborate together more.”
• “(Name) be more authoritative, make sure students know that they are in college.”
• “Stop allowing professors to talk to college students like they are 3.”
• “I believe that the professors could ask more students how they felt about assignments.”
More Program Organization & Communication

• “More organization!”
• “Split the classes up so that there is more of a break or difference between classes”.
• “Try adjusting the schedule so that there is not huge gaps between classes.”
• “Better communication & notification with due dates.”
• “For improvement, I suggest that there be times in which the class just discusses how everything is.”
Major Conclusions

• Students reported that the TLC program contributed to their learning in a wide variety of ways (e.g., forming friendships and developing critical thinking skills).

• These cognitive constructs are not in a *Vacuum*. They are best understood together – in a holistic manner.

• Qualitative data allows us to hear student voices and understand their in-depth experiences.

• Students offered a wide variety of suggestions for improvement. Each individual community may benefit from different improvement strategies.
Implications

• Students seem to react positively to TLC interventions that facilitate positive connections, interactions, equip them with skills necessary to effectively adjust to college, and help them make connections between courses.

• Pedagogical strategies that facilitate Integration and Application of Learning, Peer Interactions, and Critical Thinking skills may be most effective in enhancing students’ overall satisfaction with their learning experiences.

• TLCs help promote high levels of engagement: Active and Collaborative Learning and Enriching Academic Experiences.
Implications

• TLC faculty have developed pedagogical strategies that foster engagement and positive learning experiences.
• The collective impact of TLC courses may be greater than any one course or intervention.
• Programs that are tailored to meet the diverse needs of students are optimal.
• TLC interventions can have positive long term impacts.
• Quantitative and qualitative data suggest that there are major variations between sections in terms of students’ learning experiences, academic success outcomes, and satisfaction levels.
Next Steps

• Continue to develop assessment techniques and methods to investigate impacts of TLC interventions.
• Comprehensive study of integrative learning.
• Focus groups or individual interviews with previous TLC students to enhance understanding of their experiences.
• Continue to develop pedagogical strategies that strengthen the positive effects TLCs.
• Use more methods to assess direct learning outcomes (e.g., examine and discuss student work and integrative assignments).
• Conduct a study to understand the notable variation in student success outcomes (GPAs and Retention rates) and students’ self-reported learning outcomes between sections.