TO: Gary Thompson, Chair of the Law & Criminal Justice and Ellen Baker, Chair of Transitional Studies  
FROM: Professor Larry Feasel and Professor Michael Nolan  
CC: Dean Carol Adams, Dean Barbara Connolly, Dean Pete Otero and Michele Reed  
DATE: January 25, 2004  
RE: Assessment of the CRJ 101 and TRS 105 Learning Community

HISTORY

The CRJ 101 and TRS 105 Learning Community first started in the Fall 2002 semester. It was assessed to be successful, and so it was expanded in the Fall 2003 semester. Two sections of TRS 105 were linked to one section of CRJ 101. This could double the number of students served. The following is a summary of that Learning Community for the fall 2003 semester.

OUTCOMES ASSESSED

As the measure of student success, we continued to use the assessment measurement of persistence in both courses, the completion of assignments and the number of students who were able to achieve a grade of “C” in both courses. The rationale for this was that a grade of “C” (or better) is required to take higher level CRJ courses, and a grade of “C” (or better) is expected to be recommended for English 101. Also a cumulative GPA of 2.0 (C) is required to graduate from MCC.

OUTCOMES

Eighty three percent (83%) of the students in the CRJ 101 and TRS 105 Learning Community were able to achieve a grade of “C” (or better) in both CRJ 101 and TRS 105. This compares to eighty (80%) from the Fall 2002 semester. This statistic represents an improvement over the previous semester while serving more students than before.

There was another cohort of students whose achievement was also tracked this past semester. There was a group of CRJ students (nine in number) who were enrolled in both TRS 105 and CRJ 101 for the fall semester, but for various reasons, they were NOT in the Learning Community. Eight were at Brighton and one at the Damon City Campus. We used the same criterion for their success rate that we did for the Learning Community members. Thirty three and one third (33.3%) of this cohort achieved a grade of “C” (or higher) in both CRJ 101 and TRS 105 while sixty six and two thirds (66.6%) did NOT achieve a grade of “C” (or higher) in both subjects.

AN OBSERVER

Krysta Sandoval from G.C.C. asked permission to observe the Learning Community section of TRS 105 for the Fall 2003 semester. Krysta was there for every class and thus spent about 45 hours with the students. Her observation and assessment is attached to this report. It was interesting to have an outside observer participate in the Learning Community experience and offer her feedback.
CONCLUSIONS

We found that this particular cohort of career students did very well in a Learning Community. It seems to fulfill their needs, and as one student said, "I felt set up for success". Since this entire cohort of students is under prepared for college level academic work, this success rate in both courses is even more noteworthy. It was also beneficial to have an outside objective observer participate in one section of this learning Community. Her feedback was useful and confirms the benefits of a Learning Community for this cohort of students. Our success rate for this Learning Community is consistent with the findings of other colleges who have successfully implemented Learning Communities.

THE FUTURE

We are in the process of planning to expand this Learning Community to change from the “linked pair” concept so that it will include more courses. Our hope is to have a Learning Community of CRJ 101, CRJ 103, TRS 105 and COS 101. There are, of course, logistical and scheduling issues yet to be resolved.