LEARNING COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT
Fall 2007
CRJ 101, CRJ 103, TRS 105 and COS 101

HISTORY:
This Learning Community started in the Fall of 2003. In 2006, there was a 70+ page assessment of this Learning Community written by Beth Scott, a graduate student at the University of Rochester’s School of Education.

The fall of 2007 saw the largest cohort of students (44) in this Learning Community. Placement is based somewhat on scores on the AccuPlacer in the language portion of the test. Reading is tested by AccuPlacer, but presently MCC does not mandate reading instruction based on those scores.

DEMOGRAPHICS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>30 Students</th>
<th>68.2%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td>31.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race / Ethnicity</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>28 students</th>
<th>63.6%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>11 students</td>
<td></td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>3 students</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>2 students</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TWO OBSERVATIONS:

Two observations were made about this particular cohort of students.

1. 77.3% (34 of 44 students) were designated as in need of assistance in Reading. As mentioned previously, reading instruction is recommended (but not mandated) at MCC. Eleven (of the 34) students did enroll in REA 098 (Reading). Twenty three (23) did not enroll in a reading course. We wanted to learn if this affected their performance.

2. 45.4% of this group (44 students) had their initial placement based on AccuPlacer revised, and they were placed into a higher level language course. Did this affect their performance?

READING INSTRUCTION

We tracked the cohort that demonstrated a need for reading instruction. Part of the group (11 students) did enroll in a reading course while the other cohort (23 students) did not enroll in a reading course (REA 098). Was there a difference in their performance in their other subjects (CRJ 101, CRJ 103 and TRS 105) between these two groups?

STUDENTS ENROLLED IN REA 098:
There were eleven (11) students in REA 098. Of the eleven, three withdrew from the course. One was a total withdrawal from all subjects, and the other two received a grade of “D” or “F” in one or more of their other subjects (CRJ 101, CRJ 103 and TRS 105).

Eight (8) students completed the REA 098. One received a grade of “F” in REA 098 (and also in the other three subjects - CRJ 101 - CRJ 103 and TRS 105).

The other seven (7) students completed a REA 098 with a grade of “C” or higher AND all seven received a grade of “C” or higher in CRJ 101 and CRJ 103 and TRS 105.

88% of the students who completed REA 098 also received a least a grade of “C” or better in their other academic subjects (CRJ 101, CRJ 103 and TRS 105).
STUDENTS NOT ENROLLED IN REA 098:

There were twenty seven (27) students in this cohort. What were their grades in CRJ 101, CRJ 103 and TRS 105? The results were as follows:

21.7% were able to hold a GPA of 2.0 or better (letter grade of “C”) in their three other subjects.

78.3% received below a “C” (D, F, W) in one or more of their three other subjects.

CONCLUSION:

There was a statistically significant difference between these two cohorts. The cohort in REA 098 was able to achieve a more consistent academic performance in their other academic subjects than the group that did not have formal reading instruction.

REVISED PLACEMENTS

41% of the Learning Community cohort had revised placements. Their original AccuPlacer placement was Ref. Admin (Refer to Admissions) or TRS 101 or TRS 103. Did this have an impact on their performance in their English class (TRS 105)? Did this have any impact on their performance in the writing portion of CRJ 101 WR?

WRITING ASSESSMENT

CRJ 101 is classified by MCC as a “WR” (Writing Intensive) course. Usually any student in a TRS language is not placed into any course designated “WR” because they are still developing their writing skills. We wanted to discover if we could examine the impact of the TRS 105 writing course on these students in the Learning Community. The logical choice would be to examine the writing component in the CRJ 101 because it is designated as a writing intensive course. While writing is required in CRJ 103 and COS 101, neither of those courses carry the writing intensive designation. The final grade in CRJ 101 (WR) is computed based on a total of 600 points. 220 of those points are based on essay writing while the remaining points are based on homework, class work, reading assignments, quizzes and tests. We chose to focus on the 220 points awarded for essay writing because that is the focus (essay writing) of TRS 105.

We wanted to compare the Learning Community with two other sections of CRJ 101 (WR) taught by Professor Kennedy to examine what all three groups scored in their writing assignments. The other two groups mostly tested higher in AccuPlacer and were deemed “college English ready” by MCC, and most were enrolled in ENG 101 (College Composition).

English:

70% with revised placements scored below a “C” in their English class (TRS 105).

The greatest majority (70%) of students with revised placements were unable to score “C” or better in their English course. This was reflected in their final grades.

Introduction to Criminal Justice WR

CRJ 101 WR (non Learning Community sections) students received 63% of the possible points for the writing. These students were judged to be “college ready” by MCC and placed in ENG 101.
CRJ 101 WR Learning Community students with unchanged Accuplacer placements received 64% of the possible points in writing.

CRJ 101 WR Learning Community students with revised placements received 56% of the possible points in writing.

It should be noted that all of these students had the same professor, same assignments and were graded using the same standards.

**Conclusions:**

One of many purposes of the Learning Community is to “level the playing field” for incoming students who need preparatory work to succeed in college. The section of the Learning Community with unchanged AccuPlacer placements were able to keep up with their peers (mostly in ENG 101) in the writing portion of CRJ 101 WR. That is a major accomplishment for them considering their demonstrated deficiencies in writing.

The students who came with revised placements scored lower in both their English course and the writing portion of CRJ 101 WR.

It should be noted that all students in these cohorts were researched individually. This is not a sampling of students or a cross section.

Special recognition should be given to the professors teaching in the Learning Community (Professors Pogue, Kennedy and Nolan). A special thanks to Gary Thompson, chair of Law and Criminal Justice, and to Joyce Madama.

**ADDENDUM to the Learning Community Assessment**

February 4, 2008

The Learning Community sections of CRJ 101 were compared to the non learning community sections of CRJ 101 (WR) taught by Professor Robert Kennedy in the fall of 2007. Those results were reported in the earlier assessment.

The question arose as to why some students in the regular (non learning community) sections of CRJ 101 (WR) demonstrated difficulty in the assigned writing assignments. More research was completed on this group.

There were three sections of “regular” CRJ 101 (WR). They were CC1, CC2, and CC4. We researched students who scored a total of 110 points or lower (out of a possible 220 points) on their writing assignments in CRJ 101 (WR). What impact did this have on their final grade in CRJ 101 (WR) and could any factors be identified that might explain why this group struggled with the writing portion of CRJ 101 (WR) since they were deemed “college writing ready” by MCC using either AccuPlacer or their high school transcript?

**FINAL GRADE**

There were sixteen (16) students who scored under 110 (out of 220) points in their writing assignments in CRJ 101 (WR). Their final grades in CRJ 101 (WR) were:

- **F** = 87.5% (14 students)
- D or D- = 22.5% (2 students)
FACTORS

Three (3) students did NOT take AccuPlacer due to their scores in high school English. They did not take the sentence or reading part of AccuPlacer. Hence there is no reading score for these students.

The other thirteen (13) students all demonstrated a need for reading via AccuPlacer. Of the 13 students, 11 students (87.5%) did not take a reading course.

The two students who did enroll in a reading course, one stopped attending in mid November, and the other completed the reading course. This student, however, had a language revised placement from TRS 103 to ENG 101.

CONCLUSIONS

In order to do the writing in CRJ 101 (WR), a student must have solid reading skills. All four papers are based on college level texts. One assignment is based on the novel No Heroes, No Villains. Two of the writing assignments are based on the two texts (Criminal Justice Today and Courts of New York). Here the students must identify key concepts in the texts and correlate them with current articles in the newspaper. Another paper is on career research which is based on reading materials from various sources. To write effectively, a student must read effectively. One factor that was common to all of these students (who had AccuPlacer scores) was the need to further their reading skills.