Weighing the Evidence: Overview of NCPR’s New Findings

Evan Weissman
MDRC
National Center for Postsecondary Research

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Outline

Rigorous Evaluations:
- Learning Communities Demonstration
- Texas Developmental Summer Bridge Study
- Implications of these findings

Moving Forward:
- Additional programs and approaches to consider
- E.g., College Readiness Partnerships
The Learning Communities Demonstration
What Are “Learning Communities”?

1) **Co-Enrollment**: Groups of about 25 students are co-enrolled in two or more courses.

2) **Instructor Collaboration**: Instructors collaborate on curriculum and helping students.

3) **Curricular Integration**: Courses are thematically linked and include joint syllabi and assignments.

4) **Additional Supports**: Students get enhanced academic support and/or counseling.
Six LC Programs Which Included Developmental Education Courses

- Queensborough Community College: Linked developmental math with a college-level course.
- Merced College: Linked developmental English and a variety of courses.
- Houston Community College: Linked developmental math with a student success course.
- Hillsborough Community College: Linked developmental reading with a student success course.
- Community College of Baltimore County: Linked developmental English, a college-level course, and seminar.
- Kingsborough Community College: Linked English with a college-level course and a student success course.
LC Implementation Findings

- Programs implemented with reasonable fidelity, but with considerable variation in how well courses were integrated.
  - Variation *within* college more than variation *between* colleges

- Programs operated at a fairly large scale.
  - Over 1,000 students per college in study
  - Over 172 learning communities in the study

- Average cost of learning communities about $500 per program group member, above base costs.
Random Assignment Design

Targeted students invited to participate in study

Students give consent

Baseline data collected

Random Assignment

Program group
Can enroll in program being studied

Control group
Receives regular courses and services
Average Impacts Across the Six Colleges

Semester-long learning communities for students in developmental education…

- Helped students earn more credits in the targeted subject area (English or math)
- Had a small positive impact on total credits earned
- Did not impact enrollment (persistence) over three semesters
Targeted Subject (Math or English)
Cumulative Credits Earned

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester 1</th>
<th>Semester 2</th>
<th>Semester 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Group</td>
<td>Program Group</td>
<td>Program Group</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Significance levels: *** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01
Total Cumulative Credits Earned

Cumulative Credits Earned

- **Semester 1**
  - Program Group: 7
  - Control Group: 6

- **Semester 2**
  - Program Group: 13
  - Control Group: 12

- **Semester 3**
  - Program Group: 16
  - Control Group: 15

*** denotes statistical significance at p < 0.001; * denotes statistical significance at p < 0.05.
Long-Term Effects: Kingsborough Program

Six years after entering the study, students:

- Earned more credits than students not in learning communities;
- Were more likely to persist; and
- Were more likely to graduate.

Differences between KCC and other programs:

- Early momentum in accumulating credits from 3-course links and inter-sessions
- More credits in link and inter-sessions
- Included developmental and college-level LCs
- Strong support services component
- Strong support of college leaders
Texas Developmental Summer Bridge Study
Developmental Summer Bridge Study

Eight colleges and universities around Texas

Conducted with IES and Houston Endowment funding, in partnership with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
Developmental Summer Bridges

Recent high school graduates participated for four to five weeks (64 -100 hours)

- Accelerated instruction in developmental math, English, and/or reading at the college
- Academic and student services support
- “College knowledge” component
- Student stipend of up to $400 for completers
DSB Implementation

- Programs implemented with reasonable fidelity, but with local flexibility and variation
- Programs studied in summer 2009
- Over 1300 students in the study
- Average cost per program group member, about $1300, with large variation between programs
Average Impacts Across Eight Institutions

Texas Developmental Summer Bridge programs…

- Accelerated students’ initial progress through college-level math and writing in the first year.
- Did not impact credits earned over 2 years.
- Did not impact college enrollment or persistence.
Students passing college level math (cumulative)

Percent Passed first college-level math course

Program Group  Control Group

Fall 2009  Spring 2010  Summer 2010  Fall 2010  Spring 2011
Students passing college level reading (cumulative)

Percent Passed first college-level reading course

- Fall 2009
- Spring 2010
- Summer 2010
- Fall 2010
- Spring 2011

- Program Group
- Control Group
Students passing college level writing (cumulative)

![Bar chart showing percent passed first college-level writing course for different semesters and program groups.](chart.png)
Implications of the Findings
Broadly Speaking:

- **Short, Focused Programs**
  - Had largely short, focused results

- **Progress in Targeted Area**
  - Didn’t necessarily lead to additional, longer term gains *over and above* what students achieved without these programs

- **Limited Impacts on Persistence**
  - Classroom interventions alone might not have leverage to impact this outcome
Additional Approaches to Increase College Success

- Accelerate or modularize developmental education
- Create structured pathways through college
- Financial aid incentives or reforms
- Secondary/postsecondary partnerships
- *Weave together a combination of the above and/or others*
College Readiness Partnerships

- Texas state funding
- Partnerships of K-12 and higher education
- Co-sponsoring programs for high school students
- Focused on college readiness
College Readiness Partnership Examples

Academic-focused programs:
- Summer bridges
- School year transition programs
- Senior year transition courses
- Early assessment/intervention programs

College-knowledge focused programs:
- Targeted outreach
- Multi-year college readiness programs
- Embedded college counseling
- College-readiness lessons
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National Center for Postsecondary Research
Teachers College, Columbia University
525 West 120th Street, Box 174, New York, NY 10027
Email: ncpr@columbia.edu
Telephone: (212) 678-3091

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