It Takes a Village:

Building Learning Communities with Blackboard, Embedded Tutoring, and Support Staff

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What is a Learning Community?

- **Two or more linked courses**
  - Common theme
  - Cohort of students

- **Provides learning experiences**
  - Builds community
  - Enhances learning
  - Fosters connections between disciplines

(Smith et al. 20)
Benefits of Learning Communities

- Organizes students and faculty into smaller groups
- Encourages integration of the curriculum
- Establishes academic and social support networks
- Socializes students to the expectations of college
- Brings faculty together in more meaningful ways
- Focuses faculty and students on learning outcomes
- Provides community-based delivery of academic support programs
- Offers a critical lens for examining the first year experience

(Laufgraben and Shapiro 3)
Evidence of Success: Kingsborough Community College

• Students in the Kingsborough Learning Community program
  • substantially outperformed control group students during their first semester
  • were more likely to have completed their remedial English requirements [after] one year of enrollment

(Bloom and Sommo)
Houston Community College
Minority Student Success

Learning Community Students vs the Student Comparison Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>African-American Students</th>
<th>Hispanic Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>65.0%</td>
<td>73.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Subgroups</td>
<td>(Enrollments Afr. Amer = 2.897 / Hispanic = 3.954)</td>
<td>(Enrollments Afr. Amer = 24 / Hispanic = 84)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
<td>79.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Subgroups</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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(“College Profile”)
NOVA’s Reading/Writing Connection
English 003/English 005

One of the first Developmental English Learning Communities offered at Northern Virginia Community College

- Links Developmental Reading and Writing
- First Learning Community Offered with a Hybrid Component
- 25 Students in Computer Lab
- Diverse Population

77.8 % pass rate in first semester offered compared to 64.1% college wide. (Fall 2004 Cohort)
Reading Component

- **Theme: Great Depression**

  Three Short Stories:
  
  “Masses of Men”

  “Gumption”

  “The Daring Young Man On The Flying Trapeze”

  and History Textbook Chapter on the Great Depression

**Novel**: *A Lesson Before Dying*

by Ernest Gaines

Power Point Presentation

Service Learning Project (10 hours)

Combined Text: *Reading/Writing Connection*
• **Theme: Great Depression**

**Formal Writing Assignments**

**Narrative Essay:**
- Overcoming a Personal Challenge

**Compare/Contrast Essay:**
- “Masses of Men” and “Gumption”

**Research Essay:**
- Topic on the Great Depression

**Literary Analysis:**
- *A Lesson Before Dying*

*MySkillsLab*: Reading and Writing Skills Practice

Combined Reading/Writing Final Portfolio
Blackboard/Hybrid Component

- Introduces students to Blackboard
  - Additional support available
- Access to course information outside of the classroom
- Students communicate in online discussion forum format
  - Pulls in current social media experience
- Builds additional community in online environment
- Assists students with organizational skills
- Allows students access to outside resources
  - Research Toolbox, External Links, and MySkillsLab

https://nvcc.my.vccs.edu/jsp/login.jsp
NOVA Gold Embedded Tutor

Our Learning Community is enriched by the NOVA Gold Embedded Tutoring Program. Our tutor

- Attends both class sessions and provides continuity
- Offers feedback on writing projects
- Assists with reading assignments
- Reviews for examinations
- Offers technological support
- Acts as an academic role model
- Provides a bridge to the Woodbridge campus tutoring center
Support Staff

- Alice Reagan, Historian: Guest Speaker
- Julie Combs/Ann Turpyn: Embedded Librarians
- Brenda Meisel: Tutoring Center Academic Support
“When I registered for English 003 and English 005, I thought it was going to be two very hard courses. Having them linked in a Learning Community was a bonus because I got more out of the experience than in two separate classes. The greatest thing about the Learning Community was having two professors who really care about how you progress.” …Jen

“The Learning Community is great for people who are just coming to NOVA; it shows them what to expect will be coming. It helps them to adjust to the environment and to know what to expect in future semesters. The two teachers are working well together.”… Ghezal
Learning Community Students
Speak Out
Two Great Tastes = One Great Idea!


*Special thanks to Dave Dillon and Hector Revollo for providing audio/visual support for this PowerPoint presentation.*