Introduction

The Utah Valley University Library provides information literacy instruction via online tutorial, class workshops, and a for-credit course (CLSS 1050). In Fall 2014, CLSS 1050 was paired with a general psychology course (PSY 1010) in a learning community. Learning communities are based on the concept of building connections and interdisciplinarity between two classes. Student performance on three assignments was assessed in comparison to the work of students who were not members of the learning community.

Would students transfer the skills learned in the library research half of the learning community to assignments in the psychology half?

Literature Review

Studies of learning communities in higher education settings suggest they can have a positive impact on students’ sense of belonging and the formation of a peer network for both social and academic support (Domizi, 2008; Jaffee, Carle, Phillips, & Paltoo, 2008; Jehangir, Williams, & Pete, 2011; Schussler & Fierros, 2008; Walker, 2003). While learning communities vary in design, they typically involve students taking at least two classes together and sometimes taking classes with students who are also living in the same residential community. Barrows and Goodfellow’s (2005) study of a chemistry learning community did not demonstrate an increase in academic achievement for the LC.

Methodology

Three different assignments were compared using the AACC’s information literacy VALUE rubric:
• 53 chapter reflections from learning community and non-learning community students.
• 12 annotated bibliographies from the learning community.
• 13 research introduction papers from the learning community.

Assignments were anonymized and two readers were assigned to each. All assignments were rated on all five points of the VALUE rubric. Scores were averaged, then analyzed using Tableau.

Results

Comparison of learning community and non-learning community VALUE Rubric scores on chapter reflections.

Chapter reflections
• Overall scores were low (low=1.4, high=1.89)
• Students in the non-learning community sections of PSY 1010 outperformed learning community students in all categories except category 1.

Annotated Bibliographies
• Students scored well in all categories (low=2.33, high=3.13)

Research Introductions
• Average scores were lower (low=1.88, high=2.50) than on the annotated bibliographies, but not as low as on the chapter reflections.

Comparison of VALUE Rubric scores on annotated bibliography assignment and research introduction paper.

Limitations

• Data is from one semester and the student sample size was small.
• Due to circumstances beyond our control, there was insufficient time to create a more integrated learning community experience.
• Pre- and post-surveys were planned and delivered to students, but there were too few responses for valid data on the qualitative aspects of the student experience in the learning community.

Conclusions

• Students do not appear to be transferring skills learned in the library course to other courses unless required.
• Learning community pairings between a library research course and an introductory course required for psychology majors may not be effective in disseminating information literacy skills.
• Another study similar to this one is also needed to alleviate any sample bias and to mitigate the effects of the limitations listed above.
• Further study is required to determine if pairing a library research course with an upper-division or research methods course would be a more effective learning community.

Bibliography


