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Michael Graham

Alexis Hauck

Jordan L. Martell

Emili N. Pickenpaugh

Angela L. Vaughan

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Comprehensive Assessment of UNIV 101 Class Leader Program



Michael Graham, MA, Alexis Hauck, MA, Jordan L. Martell, MA,
Emili N. Pickenpaugh, MA, & Angela L. Vaughan, Ph.D
University 101, University of Northern Colorado

Introduction

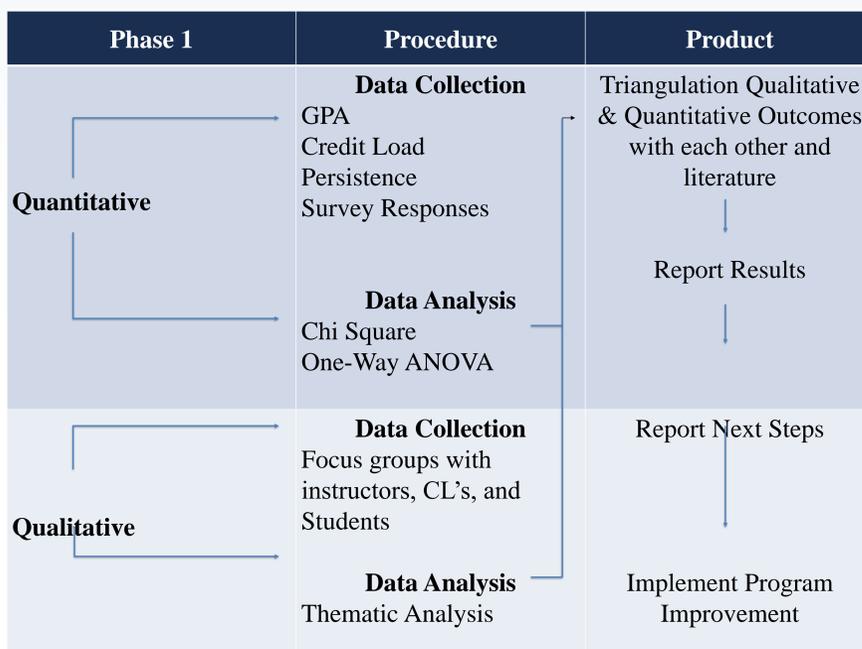
UNIV 101 and the Class Leader Program

- UNIV 101 at the University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) is a 3-credit, research based academic course that counts toward general education credits for all students enrolled. The overall philosophy of this course is to provide the opportunity for students to attempt and complete rigorous college-level academic tasks with scaffolded support of highly trained instructors.
- Research shows students who have participated in the UNIV101 program have higher levels of persistence and have higher GPA's than non-participants (Vaughan, Lalonde, & Jenkins-Guarnieri, 2014).
- The Class Leader (CL) Program is a peer mentoring program where second year students whom successfully completed UNIV 101 their freshman year and were identified as exceptional students are nominated, complete a rigorous interview procession, and in-depth training protocols to be paired with instructors to provide academic and socio-emotional support to UNIV 101 students.
- Studies indicate that the inclusion of peer leaders in the classroom can increase student engagement and achievement, campus connection, and persistence (Rieske & Benjamin, 2015; Smith, 2008; Topping, 1998).

Purpose

- The UNIV101 program at UNCO seeks to make curricular changes every year in order to better meet the needs of its students and to reach program aims (i.e., increased achievement and retention). For Fall 2019, the changes included refinements to the CL program with the overarching goal of increasing student success. The current study utilized both quantitative outcome measures and qualitative focus groups as well as survey data to assess the effectiveness of the CL program. In particular, the researchers were interested in determining the benefit to UNC students and the impact the CL program has on student engagement at UNCO.

Research Design



Quantitative Results

- The chi-square test of homogeneity showed similar persistence scores between students who had a CL (86%) and students who did not have a CL (86%).
- The chi-square test of homogeneity showed a slight increase in persistence scores between first-generation students who had a CL (82%) and first-generation students who did not have a CL (81%).
- First-Term GPA was greater for students who had a CL ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 0.82$) compared to students who did not have a CL ($M = 2.80$, $SD = 1.10$). In the ANOVA analysis, there was a significant main effect for students who had a CL [$F(1, 1720) = 5.29$, $p = .02$].
- First-generation students' First-Term GPA was greater for students who had a CL ($M = 2.90$, $SD = 0.83$) compared to students who did not have a CL ($M = 2.50$, $SD = 1.15$). In the ANOVA analysis, there was a significant main effect for students who had a CL [$F(1, 711) = 12.87$, $p < .0001$].

Persistence to Spring: Chi-Square Test of Homogeneity

	<i>n</i>	Persisted	<i>p</i>
All	402	347 (86%)	.87
Class Leaders	1320	1143 (86%)	
Non-Class Leaders			
First-Generation Students	185	152 (82%)	.67
Class Leaders	528	425 (81%)	
Non-Class Leaders			

Descriptive Statistics: First-Term GPA

	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
All	402	3.0	0.82
Class Leader Sections	1320	2.8	1.10
Non-Class Leader Sections			
First-Generation Students	185	2.9	0.83
Class Leader Sections	528	2.5	1.15
Non-Class Leader Sections			

Qualitative Results

CL Experiences

- I just completely enjoyed the experience, and it's so fun to watch them come in as timid freshmen and then grow as individuals and just know each other, and some of them are going to be roommates next year, and all kinds of fun stuff.
- It helped me with my future career, and I really enjoyed the time that I had with my students, seeing them grow.
- I am not planning to be in education, so being in a role in a classroom like this was completely new to me and something I've never thought of before and my instructor really took the time to go over everything with me so I felt comfortable being there.

Student Experience of CLs

- I feel like I could relate to my CL a lot, mostly because she was in the same major as I was. She answered a lot of questions that I had about how to register next year and she really understood what I was going through.
- As far as during class goes, I think my CL was really utilized. She was always a part of one of the groups when we were discussing topics, or when we're working on something she'd come up and check on all of us.
- [For Research Night] My instructor and my CL, they walked us through how to dress, how to act, how to keep the conversation flowing. I thought that was really cool that when we did that in class.
- I think my CL definitely showed aspects of being successful, because she mentioned during the year that she had an injury her freshman year and she had to, not drop out of college, but leaving for a few months and then had to catch all the way up and everything. And that's pretty hard to do, especially in college.

Instructor Experience of CLs

- Instructors expressed appreciation for thoroughness and thoughtfulness of instructor/CL pairings.
- Instructors were grateful students picked up on relational dynamics of instructor/CL that served as modeling for students.
- Instructors discussed enjoying having former students serve as CLs because a relationship already existed to build upon.
- Instructors raved about CLs providing students applicable student perspectives on course information and assignments which made course content more relatable.

Participants

2019 First Year Students: 1722

CL Group: 402

Male ($n = 140$) Female ($n = 262$)
First Generation ($n = 185$)
Students of Color ($n = 169$)

Non-CL Group: 1320

Male ($n = 141$) Female ($n = 1179$)
First Generation ($n = 713$)
Students of Color ($n = 704$)

Focus Groups

Focus groups and interviews were conducted with students, CL's, and instructors following completion of the CL program.

Classroom Leaders: ($n = 15$) (In One Focus Group)

Students: ($n = 10$) (In Three Focus Groups)

Instructors: ($n = 15$) (In One Focus Group)

References

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- Topping, K. (1998). The Effectiveness of peer tutoring in further and higher education: A typology and review of the literature. In S. Goodlad (Ed.), *Mentoring and tutoring by students* (pp. 49–70). London, England: Kogan Page.
- Vaughan, A. L., Lalonde, T., & Jenkins-Guarnieri, M. A. (2014). Assessing student achievement in large scale educational programs using hierarchical propensity scores. *Research in Higher Education*, 55(6), 564 – 580. doi: 10.1007/s11162-014-9329-8

Survey Data

<i>n</i> = 364	Welcome	Belief in Ability	Spring Persistence	Graduation
Other Leadership	.342**	.434**	.571**	.257**
Welcome		.633**	.381**	.143**
Belief in Ability			.504**	.168**
Spring Persistence				.308**

Students completed survey items to further ensure assessment of the CL program. Listed below are example items and the correlations of these items are present in the table above.

- My experience with my CL has influenced me to consider pursuing other leadership opportunities across campus.
- My CL made me feel welcome in class.
- My CL helped me believe in my ability to be successful as a student.
- My CL has been influential in my decision to return to UNCO in the Spring semester.
- Now having almost completed your first semester, do you anticipate/plan on graduating from UNCO?

Conclusion

Throughout the past four years that CL program has gone through many evolutionary steps to continue refining the focus of enhancing student success. During that time, the UNIV 101 department has increased the rigorous interview procedures, improved the training protocols for CLs, and strengthened the program visibility through establishing interdisciplinary partnerships across campus. Student outcome data indicate the CL program bolsters student success and impacts how the university experience molds their choices around pursuing leadership opportunities on campus at UNCO. Specifically, encouraging outcome data demonstrates the CL program's effectiveness at engaging underrepresented groups (i.e., first-generation student, students of color, and male students) to aid in their establishing a sense of belonging which promotes persistence at UNCO. #GOBEARS!