FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY

DOCTORATE IN COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADERSHIP

CELEBRATING **10** YEARS

DCCL Dissertations: Making an *IMPACT!*

CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF DCCL DISSERTATION RESEARCH

Continuing our Celebration!

A few months ago, in the first issue of this publication, we announced the beginning of our year-long celebration of the DCCL Program's 10th Anniversary. We're using our anniversary as a motivation for celebrating and highlighting the dissertations produced by our marvelous DCCL graduates.

This quarter, the topics we'll be highlighting are centered around effective teaching and learning. From institutional initiatives and programmatic solutions to classroom-based strategies and faculty support, these dissertations focus on improving student success by ensuring academic quality and fulfilling the mission of community colleges.

Innovations in Community Colleges

We'll start our focus by highlighting the dissertations that examined the ever-changing role of community colleges and the innovations that have stretched the reach and the impact of community colleges on higher education in the United States.

An early dissertation from Jan Karazim (Cohort 1), evaluated an intercollegiate consortium developed by five community colleges in Michigan to support quality and sustainable MRI programming. Participants in the consortium discussed the importance of establishing an equitable financial model, existing professional relationships across colleges, and the role of a champion to provide leadership.

Four dissertations focused on recent changes being embraced by community colleges: offering baccalaureate degrees, opening residential halls, implementing competency-based programming, and expanding cohort learning models.

When the first community colleges started offering baccalaureate degrees, many in higher education were skeptical about program quality and workforce acceptance of the graduates. Dave Butke (C1) studied the perspectives of two groups: nurse leaders and community college BSN graduates currently working in the healthcare industry in order to shed light on these complex issues. Study results indicated that community college BSN programs adequately and successfully prepare BSNs to enter the workforce and that success in the workforce is determined by factors more important than the graduates' institution.

Another growing trend among community colleges, especially those serving large geographic areas, is offering residence halls.

A 2005 Lumina Foundation report (Bailey & Alfonso, Jan 2005) stressed the importance of data-driven decision making in community college research and calling for institutions to create and maintain "a culture of evidence."

Responding to that report, Alicia C. Dowd (Lumina, Dec 2005) emphasized that the goal should be "a culture of inquiry, one in which data move out of the limelight, and practitioners move to center stage." Dowd identified three key areas that a culture of inquiry must examine:

- *Work to identify and address problems by purposefully analyzing data about student learning and progress.*
- *Engage in sustained professional development and dialogue about barriers to student achievement.*
- *Have the capacity for insightful questioning of evidence and informed interpretation of results.*

DCCL is committed to this same philosophy and is proud of the contributions our students' dissertations contribute to the conversation.

Want to read more? Find and download DCCL dissertations: http://fir.ferris.edu/

Community College Innovations (continued)

Marcus Bennett, Cohort 3, developed a model for a living-learning community that helps students build effective relationships with peers, faculty, and staff; develop leadership skills; participate in service-learning activities; and establish personal development plans.

Competency-based education (CBE) programming is another innovation moving into US higher education. Lisa Webb Sharpe (C3) examined postsecondary CBE models, modified the models to meet the needs and resources of community colleges, and developed a framework applicable to most community colleges.

Cohort One student, Trish Konovalov, studied the effects of a program innovation on the students who participated in the program. A cohort model was developed by a community college to serve a group of non-traditional students who had lost their jobs when a local company closed. The cohort's 84% completion rate was marked by strong advising, supportive peer relationships, and an effective learning support center on campus.

Community college efforts to make college education available to motivated high school students was the focus of four DCCL dissertations. Three of these focused on dual enrollment programs and a fourth on an early college system.

Brent Mishler (C4) responded to local needs for a more systematic approach to a growing population of dual enrolled students by developing a model for effective services, as well as dedicated office and staff.

Sean Adams and Rick Smith (both, C3) studied dual enrollment program characteristics and successes. Sean's quantitative study examined dual enrollment participation and completion rates and patterns and the significance of the physical distance between the community college and the high schools.

Rick's study focused on the effects of different types of dual enrollment available at a small rural community college. Among the results was that persistence and completion rates were lower among students in all programs than the overall college rates.

Steve Reed (C5) also examined an early college program and the perceptions of students who completed the program. Study results indicated that students highly valued the college readiness supports and expressed need for career exploration activities that extended beyond STEM careers.

Innovations in Community Colleges

(from top: Karazim, Butke, Bennett, Webb Sharpe, Konovalov, Mishler, Adams, Smith, and Reed)

Beyond the Classroom

(from left: Parker, Jones, and Thomas)

Innovative Educational Experiences, Beyond the Classroom

Some innovations enhance students' education experiences outside of the traditional classroom and prepare them for their careers and their futures. Three DCCL dissertations offered models for expanding students' skills beyond traditional classroom course content.

Ken Parker (C6) investigated the current training in soft skills—those intangible skills such as work ethic, communication, problem solving, and critical thinking—available in community colleges. Parker then collected best practices to design a model for a robust, soft skills development program.

Beyond the Classroom (continued)

Suzy Jones (C3) saw the value in on-campus employment for providing students with meaningful opportunities for growth and development and preparation for future careers. Based on her research, Jones developed procedures, improved training and orientation materials, and redefined goals and outcomes for a community college student work program.

The complexities of today's global economy places new challenges on workers in all sectors. Recognizing the importance for students to develop global competence before they enter the workforce, Marc Thomas designed a comprehensive Education Abroad program with clear goals, outcomes, and assessment of student learning.

(Mandrell and Bouthillier)

Supporting Effective Teaching and Classroom Practices

Several DCCL students focused their research on ways to support faculty and improve the learning environment. Jon Mandrell (C3) examined institutional approaches that can improve the integration, success, and professional development of adjunct faculty and improve appreciation of and respect for this essential community college population.

Barb Bouthillier, of cohort 4, also focused her research on adjunct faculty. Bouthillier designed a model for a Faculty Learning Community helping adjunct math faculty improve developmental mathematics classrooms and curricula.

Two DCCL studies investigated ways that technology can be used to improve and enhance classroom practices. Carmen Allen (C5) provided technological and innovative strategies designed to help faculty enhance their use of student data, engage students more actively in the classroom, and monitor their student performance more effectively.

(Allen and Dean)

Jasmine Dean (C4) developed a guide for faculty to help them integrate technology appropriately into their classrooms focusing on student engagement, formative and summative assessment, and effective use of their campus' learning management system.

Supporting and Enhancing Effective Teaching

Faculty teaching methods, at all levels of education, have moved from traditional "stand and deliver" lecturers to active, engaged facilitators of learning. Four DCCL students studied the impact of specific teaching strategies and approaches on student success.

Joe Vitanza, from Cohort One, studied the effect of including critical thinking activities in an introductory computer skills course. His research found that making expectations clear, explicitly teaching critical thinking, and promoting active learning dramatically enhanced students' learning and retention.

Lois Darga (C3) examined faculty and student perceptions of learner-centeredness and learner-centered practices to see how closely they aligned, and to identify best practices that can improve student learning and student retention.

(from top: Vitanza, Darga, Wayne, Klein, and Peterson)

Cammy Wayne, from the Harper Cohort, investigated three community colleges' implementations of principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). The three institutions represented a range of experience with UDL, from novice through expert. She examined the resources, training, and support provided at the institutions to help faculty improve accessibility and opportunity for learning for students of all backgrounds and learning abilities.

Kim Klein (C1) examined the effect of a service-learning component in a community college American Government class. Service learning, as a pedagogical approach, challenges students to learn by doing, by taking action, and by confronting their assumptions and their learning by seeing the principles in action. Klein examined courses with and without a service-learning component to identify links between active learning and persistence.

Andrew Peterson (C5) developed a board game designed to influence student retention, success, and college completion. Intended for students in freshman seminars, the game provides opportunities for players to learn about developing an academic plan, enrolling in classes, practicing effective behaviors, and dealing with debt. Players make choices that simulate the priorities they will set in their own academic careers and challenge themselves to succeed in college.

Program-Based Initiatives

DCCL dissertations frequently evaluate existing community college programs to measure success and identify areas for improvement. Three dissertations looked at program-specific concerns, looking for solutions that can be valuable for themselves but also for a broader audience in higher education.

Sandi Ferencz (Harper cohort) examined retention rates in dental hygiene programs to determine if there is a relationship between student completion and the instructional setting. The study examined several features, including residential versus commuter campuses, early/rolling enrollment options versus standard enrollment, and public versus private institutional structures. While the retention data revealed no significant difference across these institutional and program differences, the participating programs all identified similar barriers to completion, including poor academic performance and family and personal responsibilities.

Dave Peruski (Cohort 1) compared the NCLEX-RN exam success rates for two groups of students in his institution's Nursing program: those entering the program as "college-ready" and those requiring developmental, or pre-college coursework. The study also compared completion rates and test scores by students' race/ethnicity and gender. Study findings included that program readiness did

Program-Based Initiatives
(from left: Ferencz, Peruski, and Lyons)

statistically impact program completion; completion rates among minorities and men showed no difference when compared to Caucasian and female students; and students who completed the nursing program, regardless of program readiness, had similar success rates on the NCLEX-RN exam.

Margaret Lyons (Cohort 6) investigated an existing mentorship program to identify predictive characteristics of positive mentor-mentee relationships in order to strengthen support for incoming first-year students in a Pharmacy program. The study also identified areas for program improvement ranging from expanded mentor training to improved communication and program materials.

Examining Developmental and First-Year Programing

Another group of DCCL dissertations examined programming for two high-risk groups: first-year students and those requiring pre-college or developmental coursework.

Kim Wagner (Harper) explored the relationships between emotional intelligence, college readiness, and success for first-year students. Kim's study looked for correlations between trait emotional intelligence (EI) and success in gateway courses, either in English or math. While the EI scores were not predictive of success in the gateway courses, higher EI scores indicated potential for increased long-term academic success.

An earlier study by Paige (Vanderhyden) Niehaus (Cohort 5) also examined EI's possible connection to student success in developmental English courses. Niehaus examined correlations between COMPASS reading scores, trait emotional intelligence, and course completion outcomes for students enrolled in a development English and reading course. The study found positive, statistically significant relationships between EI and course completion rates, but weak correlations with COMPASS reading scores.

Jennifer Ernst (Cohort 5) evaluated her institution's Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) by comparing completion rates for ALP students and students in traditional developmental English courses. The study's qualitative findings revealed enhanced confidence and persistence supporting the quantitative results that indicated improved completion rates.

Pam Lau (Cohort 3) also evaluated an institutional program for developmental students; her study examined the success of a contextualized teaching and learning (CTL) curriculum in meeting
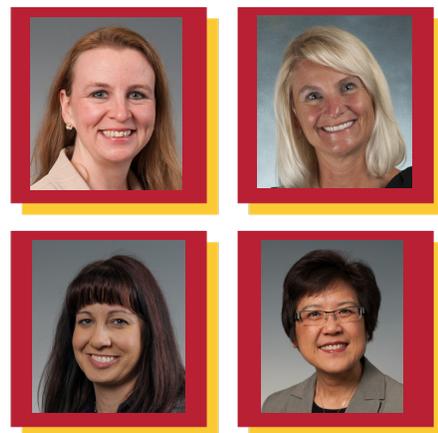
Developmental and First-Year Programing
(from top left: Wagner, Niehaus, Ernst, Lau)

the needs of developmental students in a developmental reading class. Lau's study compared success rates of developmental reading students in a CTL program with non-CTL students and explored the curriculum's impact using focus group sessions. Findings indicated that CTL students achieved higher completion rates, earned more credit hours, and attempted and completed more college courses than the non-CTL students. Qualitative results affirmed the benefits of the CTL program for increasing student motivation and enhancing the social aspects of the classroom.

(from top: Points, Ponder, Dallianis, Cloutier, and Flint)

Examining Developmental and First-Year Programing
(continued)

This final group of dissertations examined institutional approaches for improving student success in mathematics and science courses.

Emily Points (Cohort 5) assessed her institution's placement testing process for the math curriculum. Students entering the institution have several options for completing placement testing, including completing optional remediation work prior to retaking the test. Results of the study indicated that students who completed remediation consistently improved their scores and that women and older students (24+ years) were more likely to complete remediation and improve their test scores.

Tony Ponder, also from Cohort 5, examined his institution's math curriculum, focusing on the impact of a corequisite model versus the traditional pre-requisite approach. Findings indicated that the corequisite model was predictive of success in one of the three gateway courses (College Algebra), but not for two other gateway courses, Quantitative Literacy and Introductory Statistics.

Megan Dallianis (Harper cohort) also investigated developmental math courses, focusing on the relationship between students' growth mindset and their success. Her research compared pre- and post-test results from experimental and control groups, with the experimental group also receiving a growth mindset intervention. While overall results did not indicate a statistically significant improvement with the intervention, students in the experimental group were found to progress to the next level of math courses at a higher percentage rate.

An earlier study by Adam Cloutier (Cohort 2) evaluated the impact of two placement improvement programs on student success. The institution's short-term workshops and 3-week review courses were found to improve placement, retention, math success, and overall college success rates for the participating students.

Ann Flint, also from Cohort 2, examined a mentoring program targeting introductory science students in a first-year Biology class to determine if the program had an impact on student success and persistence. Study results were mixed, with both qualitative and quantitative results indicating that, for one group, mentored students succeeded and persisted at a greater rate than those who did not have mentors; however, in the second group, no differences in success or persistence were indicated. The qualitative results for the second group suggest that the respondents may have been students who did not need the mentoring intervention to succeed.

Join us next quarter for Issue 3, highlighting dissertations on institutional initiatives, innovative approaches, and strategies for organizational change

CONNECT WITH US!
DCCL produces several publications, including a quarterly newsletter for program alums and the monthly *Perspectives* — a compilation of leaders' views of critical current issues. Access all of our ***Publications* here**, or contact ccleadership@ferris.edu to be added to our mailing list.

Doctorate in Community College Leadership
410 Oak Street, ALU 115
Ferris State University, Big Rapids, MI 49307

https://www.facebook.com/ferrisccleadership/

ccleadership@ferris.edu

https://www.linkedin.com/groups/3183556/