

**DELTA COLLEGE  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
DINNER MEETING  
February 18, 2014  
Delta College Main Campus Room N7**

**Board Present:** M. Nash, M. Rowley, E. Selby, R. Stafford

**Board Absent:** R. Emrich, K. Houston-Philpot, K. Lawrence-Webster, J. MacKenzie, D. Wacksman

**Others Present:** B. Baker, T. Brown, P. Clark, E. Crane, C. Curtis, C. Dzurka, D. Freed, A. French, B. Gladly-Teschendorf, M. Gmeiner, J. Goodnow, L. Govitz, T. Heinz, M. Januzzi, H. Konieczka, G. Luczak, D. Lutz, R. McCracken, J. Miller, M. Moore, C. Morley, M. Mosqueda, J. Nichols, D. Peruski, F. Peters, G. Przygocki, L. Ramseyer, R. Rice, K. Schuler, T. Stitt, Z. Swanson, A. Trabalka, L. Ullrich, A. Ursuy, B. Webb, S. Witzke

**Press Present:** J. Hall, WSGW; K. Lutz, Delta Collegiate

Board Chair, R. Stafford called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m.

Dave Peruski introduced Bethen Gladly-Teschendorf, Coordinator of the Learning Communities Program along with Angela Trabalka and three students, Hayley Konieczka, Jen Nichols and Zack Swanson, who took part in a recent learning community.

B. Gladly-Teschendorf started off by defining a learning community as two or more classes from different disciplines with one cohort of students enrolled in all of the courses within the learning community. There are a host of benefits that the students receive which include: increased persistence, higher retention rates, degree completion, and value added experience. Students perceive that they receive more support, encouragement, and richer learning. They also develop a better self-perception which includes more confidence and an increased sense of responsibility for their learning.

Learning Communities have been a part of Delta College for 23 years. The first one was held at the Ricker Center in 1991 and offered developmental composition and reading. At any given time around 2.5% of Delta's total enrollment are enrolled in a learning community. Learning communities are designed with the student's goals in mind.

Much of the leading research at the national level has been done by Vincent Tinto from Syracuse University. With money from the Lumina Foundation much of his research has been focused on the impact of learning communities on at-risk students. In his report, "What Have We Learned About the Impact of Learning Communities on Students?" he noted five characteristics that were traced in two-year and four-year institutions across the nation. These

included the formation of self-supporting groups both in and out of the classroom; making friendships and social engagement which resulted in an increase in academic engagement; persistence at substantially higher rates; their understanding and knowledge is enriched; and an increased sense of responsibility for their own learning.

In Tinto's other report, "Access Without Opportunity Is Not Support" it was found that underprepared students who take learning communities feel they are more engaged both in and out of the classroom and perceive that they received a value added experience. Persistence rates across all two-year and four-year institutions for under-prepared students were 5 – 15% higher than comparison groups.

Following a group of Delta College's most at-risk students from Winter of 2009 to Winter of 2010 they had a 12.3% higher persistence rate than comparable students. From Fall of 2009 to Fall of 2010 the group had a 11.5% higher persistence rate. After students participated in a learning community they had an 8.5% higher retention rate than all other Delta College students.

A group of students who took the ENG 112(H) and HIS111(H) learning community were tracked for six semesters along with a group of students who took the same two classes but not in a learning community format. The retention rates for both groups were relatively similar.

Delta has participated in a national survey several times in which they measure the student's perceptions of their learning within the learning community. The most recent results from Spring 2012 include:

- 90% developed responsibility for their own learning
- 86% required to think critically and analytically
- 82% persist when faced with academically challenging work
- 87% learning community helped them be successful in their future courses

The capstone marketing class at Delta wanted to conduct an assessment project. Their results found that 100% of the students enrolled in a learning community during the 2012 Winter semester would recommend a learning community to a friend.

Currently Delta College is assessing the quality of grading standards in learning communities. B. Gladys-Teschendorf explained that correlation coefficient is the relationship between two variables with 1 being perfect correlation and 0 meaning that there is no correlation. They compared the same two groups of students who took ENG 112 and HIS111 as a learning community and those who took those same two classes in the same semester but not in a learning community. The correlation coefficient in the learning community group was .73 while the comparison group was a .65. This is an assessment that is still on going.

Each of the students, Hayley Konieczka, Jen Nichols and Zack Swanson, highlighted the benefits they received by taking a learning community. They noted that they got to know all of the

students in their class at a more personable level, gained the confidence to communicate with their other professors and the fact that the class inspired one individual to change their major.

B. Glady-Teschendorf indicated that the National Conference which was founded by Delta College's Elaine Karls and Roz Weedman will be held in November at the DoubleTree in Bay City. It is attended by an international audience.

M. Rowley asked about increases in both size and scope and what would be needed to obtain those. B. Glady-Teschendorf noted that she would love to see an increase in both. She also noted that other colleges and universities have made learning communities a requirement or they offer a first year experience which includes a learning community. R. Selby asked why the program hasn't grown. He also noted that in previous presentations on this topic it was shared that the faculty that teach these courses are energized and wanted to know if this was still accurate. B. Glady-Teschendorf agreed that faculty are energized but also recommends that they limit themselves to one or two learning communities a semester. She commented that awareness is most likely a key issue as to why students don't know about learning communities.

R. Stafford asked about the logistics of a learning community. B. Glady-Teschendorf indicated that Delta College uses two different models. A linked learning community in which a cohort of students attend one class with an instructor and then possibly move to another classroom and have the other class with a different instructor. The instructors are still working and planning together. The fully integrated model is where both faculty members are present in the classroom and the class meets for double the contact hours.

D. Lutz asked if there were any financial implications in regards to learning communities. D. Peruski noted that there is no additional cost incurred by the college.

There being no further business, the dinner meeting was adjourned at 6:52 p.m.

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Talisa Brown, Board Assistant Secretary

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Andrea Ursuy, Board Secretary