

Liz Coleman  
Sabbatical Written Report  
Sabbatical taken winter 2009  
September 17, 2009

I had two general objectives I intended to meet during my winter term sabbatical. Each of these evolved into much large projects that carried through the remainder of last academic year. I will speak about each of them in detail.

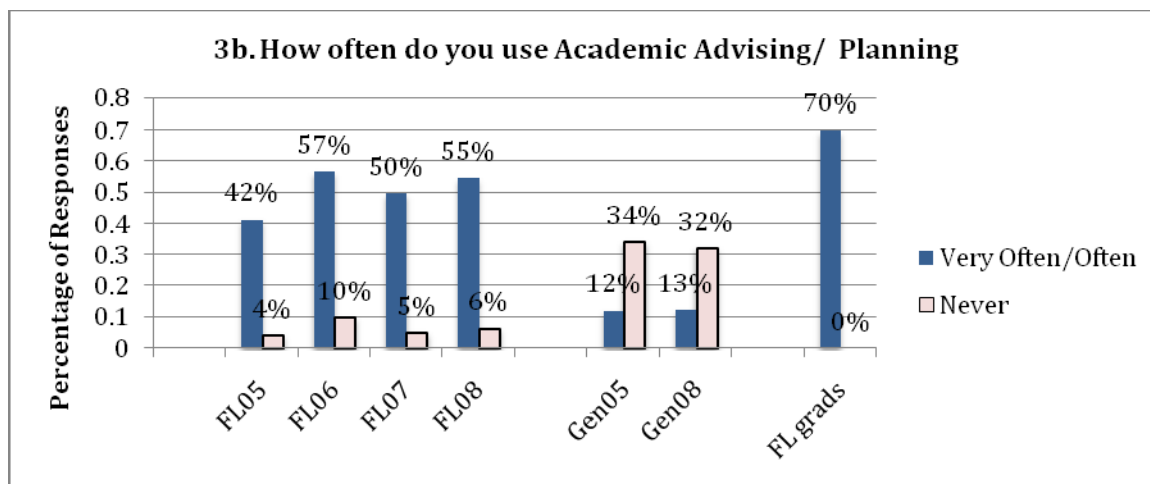
1. *Concentrate on the coursework for my graduate program.*

One of the year long courses in my graduate program was a research class, and the bulk of the work was accomplished during winter term. Because of my involvement with the Fast Lane Learning Community at LCC, I wanted to discover if what we were doing at LCC was in fact enhancing student success and retention of LCC students. My topic evaluated research on student engagement techniques, as well as those techniques that we were trying to improve with Fast Lane. "What are the effects of the Fast Lane Learning Community on Lane Community College students?" was my topic and I sought to provide the members of the Title III committee with success data and statistics, thereby helping Lane as well as fulfilling my program requirements.

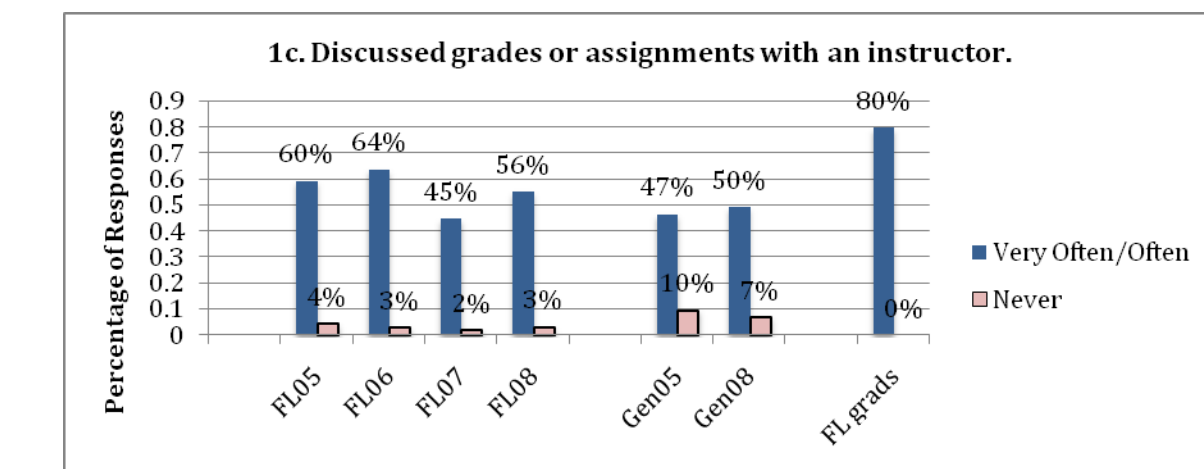
I compiled data from two CCSSE surveys (2005 & 2008) given at LCC in 2005 and 2008, and compared the results from the general student body with identical questions administered to the Fast Lane students each fall from 2004 – 2008. Finally, I interviewed a random sampling of students who had successfully completed the Fast Lane Learning Community and resurveyed them, as well as asking open ended questions about the learning community and how it effected their ability to succeed in college. Spring term, I wrote a 38 page report with many graphs comparing use of success strategies between Fast Lane students and the average LCC student.

Three themes emerged as students spoke about their experiences in their first term with the Fast Lane Learning Community; Fast Lane students felt great *confidence* in their ability to succeed, they noted their *academic improvement* since beginning college with the learning community, and the *social impact* from being in a three class cohort aided even the shy students in making and keeping close friendships among the classmates. All three of these factors are shown by the research that students are more likely to stay in school if they relate to the college services, faculty and other students.

I gave a presentation about my findings to a SAGA committee during the spring term, in which I shared the statistical findings from my research. One area of interest was that students in the Fast Lane Learning Community were much more likely to use academic advisors as they continued through college. During their first term, they are given a class assignment to visit counselors or advisors, and some terms the instructors brought them into the classroom. The positive long term effect is demonstrated by the fact that after the matriculated into the general student body they continued to use advisors or counselors at a much higher rate, than those students who did not begin with the learning community.



Students enrolled in Fast Lane discussed grades or assignments with instructors at a much higher rate, than general Lane students surveyed by the CCSSE. Terms and years later, those students who began in the learning community continued to communicate with faculty members at a much higher rate.



I am happy to make my entire report available to the college.

2. *Fulfill 100 hours toward my internship of 150 hours required for my graduate program.*

This goal included several smaller goals, which I will discuss individually.

- Study additional activities for Skip Downing's book On Course to improve my fall term instruction as part of the Fast Lane Learning Community. This was very effective as I was able to incorporate few new strategies during spring term with my Advanced Tutor Certification course improving my use of questioning techniques. As I prepare to teach On Course again this fall, I am eager to try new things, including certain icebreakers, group work, case studies and organizational structures.

- Prepare a presentation for the On Course national conference held in April, 2009 in Raleigh, NC. My presentation proposal was accepted, and I facilitated a 90 minute session titled “Teach to Learn” in which I demonstrated the use of an interactive activity I adapted for an old literacy exercise. The nine participants were so excited by it, they all requested copies. The focus was to remain a learner while in the teaching role, allowing yourself to stay open to any collateral learning that may occur in the classroom, I had never presented at a national conference before, so this stretched me far beyond my current comfort zone.
- Assist the conference committee with planning and preparations before the conference, as well as evaluative efforts after the conference.
  - During the conference, I was on the steering committee and assisted with menu orders, presenter introductions, collecting evaluations, and other odd jobs.
  - Before the conference, they assigned me the task of finding contact information for all the colleges and universities in three southern states. Through the Internet, I completed a chart with updated names, phone numbers, and web addresses for over 1,500 schools. It was fascinating to visit so many college websites. This experience will help me as I continue to update the web presence for Tutoring Services at LCC.
  - After the conference, I was asked to identify a way for presenters to send handouts and documents for easy storage and retrieval by conference participants. I created a shell of a PBwiki for them to use next year.

In summation, my professional growth and development during winter term far exceeded all my goals. The ability to spend extra time on my research project gave me experience with statistical analysis, skills with excel by creating charts documenting longitudinal data, and gaining a deeper understanding of research, by conducting a complex study.

Providing assistance to the National On Course conference members introduced me to professionals within an organization that matches my goals as an educator. Every person presenting and attending the conference is deeply committed to engaging students in their educational environment. New strategies are constantly being tried, shared, improved upon, and shared again. I am eager to continue my deeper learning and sharing with the professionals nationwide who, like me, seek to involve students in transformational learning. After I complete my graduate program of study, I will continue to be a regular presenter and attendee of the national On Course conferences. Meanwhile, I am excited to be part of the team at LCC that will grow the First Year Experiences and inclusion of Skip Downing’s eight principles of successful students into current LCC faculty curriculum. I co-presented to the English department faculty in September 2009, who are interested in teaching writing classes paired with College Success classes. I feel my involvement at the national level has given me more confidence to proceed as a faculty member and leader at Lane.