Aligned Learning Communities and Student Thriving: A First in the World Project

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John Carroll University

Overview of today's presentation

- Brief introduction to the John Carroll University grant

- What are student success and thriving factors?

- Measuring factors associated with student thriving

- Aligned Learning Communities

- The "murky middle" – a brief comment

- Collaborative opportunities?

Brief introduction to the John Carroll University Grant

- U.S. Department of Education - four-years - $1.3 Million
  - Grant #P116F150059.
    - Dr. Terry Mills, Project Director – tmills@jcu.edu
    - Dr. Graciela Lacueva, Co-Project Director – lacueva@jcu.edu
    - Dr. Beth Rosenthal, Project Coordinator – brosenthal@jcu.edu
    - Dr. Tina Facca-Miess, Statistics Consultant – tfacca@jcu.edu
    - Dr. Melissa Demetrikopolous, External Evaluator – mdemetr@biophi.org

- Regression Discontinuity Design (RDD)
  - Starting in fall 2016, three successive freshmen cohorts (~2,200 participants).
  - The Gold group will be block enrolled into Aligned Learning Communities.
  - The Blue group will follow the "normal" enrollment patterns.
  - Establish baseline equivalency for Gold and Blue groups.
  - Pooled data across three years (not a cohort comparison).

Emotional Intelligence Resource Team
EQ-I 2.0 Certified
Level B Psychometric Instrument
20 hours training

- Dr. Sheila McGinn

- Dr. Mike Martin

- Ms. Danielle Carter

- Dr. Kyle O'Dell

- Dr. Maryclaire Moroney (TBD)

- Dr. Graciela Lacueva

- Dr. Nick Santilli

- Dr. Terry Mills

- Mr. Brian Williams (TBD)

- Ms. Cathy Anson (TBD)

Enrollment Resource Group

- Dr. Maryclair Moroney

- Dr. Anne Kugler

- Ms. Marty Mondello-Hendren

- Dr. Pam Mason

- Dr. Laura Atkins

- Dr. Graciela Lacueva

U.S. Department of Education Evidence Standards

- Goal of ED evidence efforts: strengthening outcomes for students by focusing grant dollars on what works and building evidence of what works based upon "What Works Clearinghouse" evidence-based standards:
  - Without Reservations – Random Control Trials
  - With Reservations – Quasi-Experiments
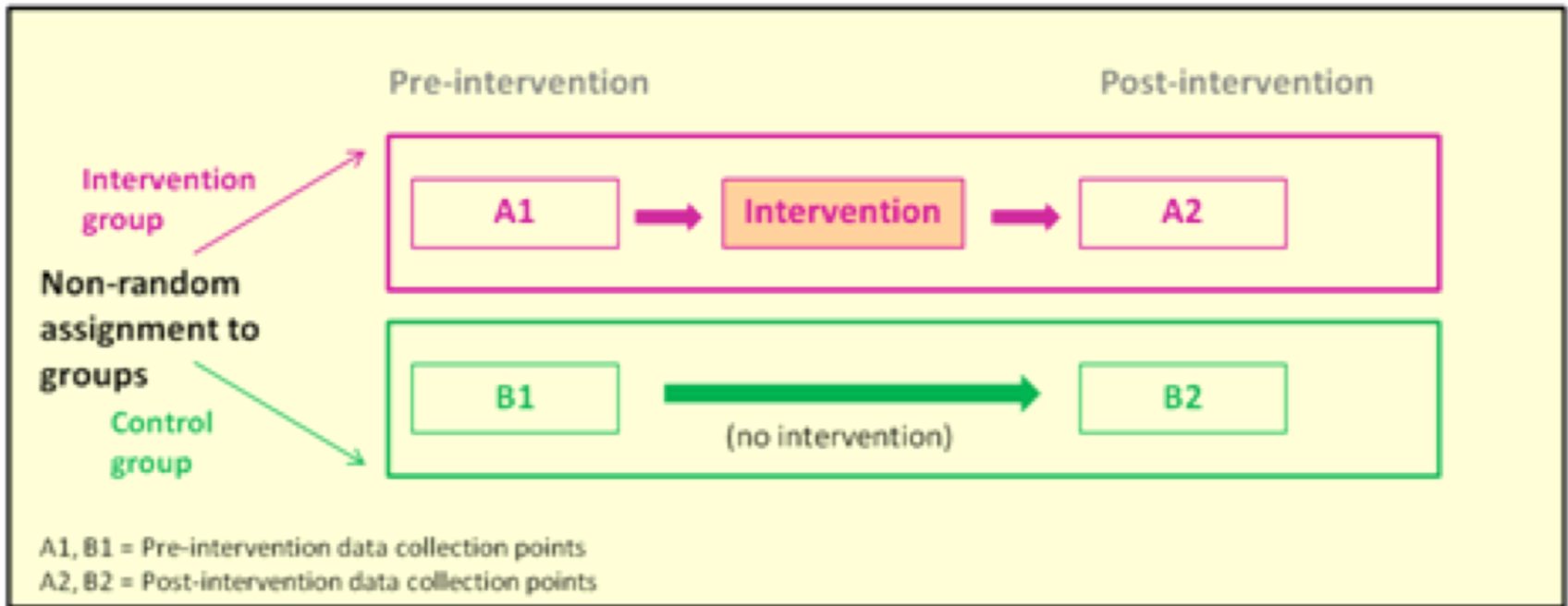 - Rigorous External Project Evaluation

U.S. Department of Education Evidence Standards

- Proposed activities need to have evidence-based rationale → required evidence on the "front end"

- Focuses on identifying effective strategies that can be disseminated → conduct rigorous, independent evaluation on the "back end"

Study Method

Classical Quasi-Experimental Design

	Pre-intervention		Post-intervention
Intervention group	A1	→ Intervention →	A2
Control group	B1	(no intervention)	B2

Non-random assignment to groups

A1, B1 = Pre-intervention data collection points
A2, B2 = Post-intervention data collection points

Regression Discontinuity Design
U.S. Department of Education
"What Works Clearinghouse"

- What Works Clearinghouse STANDARDS FOR REGRESSION DISCONTINUITY DESIGNS Version 4.0 (2015). Available online at: http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/reference_resources/wwc_rdd_standards_122315.pdf

- A study qualifies as an RDD study if it meets all of the following criteria:
  - Treatment assignments are based on a forcing variable; units with scores at or above (or below) a cutoff value are assigned to the treatment group while units with scores on the other side of the cutoff are assigned to the comparison group

Regression Discontinuity Design
U.S. Department of Education
"What Works Clearinghouse"

- The forcing variable must be ordinal with a sufficient number of unique values. This condition is required to model the relationship between the outcomes and forcing variable.

- There must be no factor confounded with the forcing variable. The cutoff value for the forcing variable must not be used to assign students to interventions other than the one being tested

- MUST meet standard with or without reservations.
  - Either all criteria are met, or minimum specified criteria are met.

Regression discontinuity scatterplot with effect
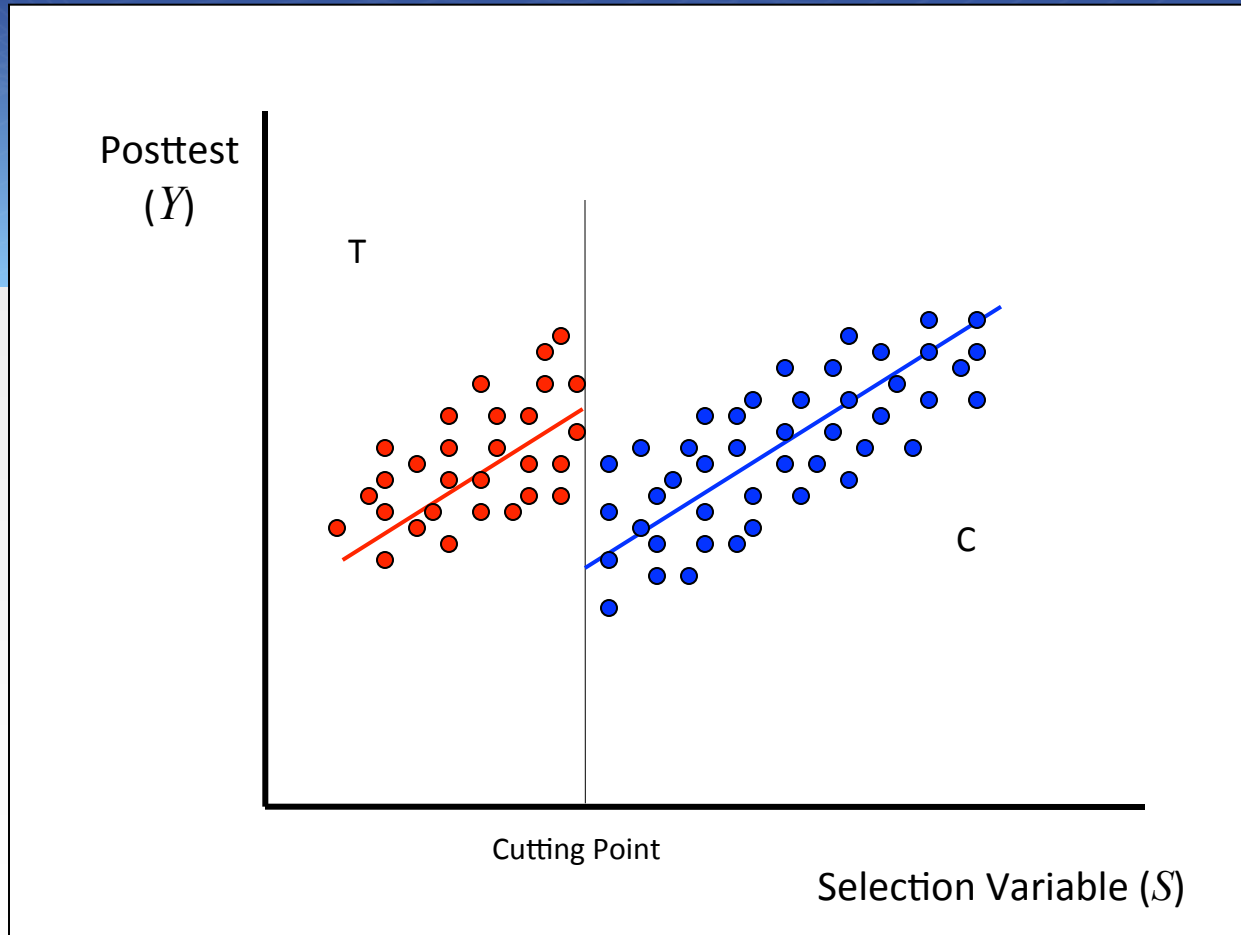
$$Y_i = B_0 + B_S S_i + B_T T_i + e_i$$

Purpose of the Project

- The proposed Aligned Learning Communities and Student Thriving Project will deliver a replicable model of an institutionally integrated approach to enhancing student success and thriving that builds on strong theories of student development; student learning communities, innovative teaching and advising, and student enrollment methods . . .

- With the specific aim of improving outcomes of first-year college students.

Project Goals

- Our proposed intervention focuses on the following project goals:
  - 1. Develop and test an aligned learning community model that integrates faculty development, student co-enrollment, service learning, and advanced student advising.

  - 2. Identify factors predictive of students' success that inform development of scalable interventions aimed to improve outcomes for undergraduate students at-risk for success in college.

  - 3. Use predictive statistical models and data techniques to track and model students' progress through an "early alert" advising system.

Participating Academic Departments

- Theology and Religious Studies

- Economics

- Biology

- English

- Communications

Factors Related to College Success

- Walsh (2003) reminds us that students' success can is influenced by a number of important factors.

- Since the success of each student in higher education is dependent on his/her <u>specific academic environment</u>, we will use the definition by Maxwell (1997) who suggests that success is influenced by factors such as students' skills, knowledge, motivation, and/or academic ability.

Factors Related to College Success

- Ender and Wilkie (2000) propose that successful students are likely to display a number of other characteristics such as:
  - high academic self-concept,
  - realistic grade and career expectations,
  - focused career objectives,
  - intrinsic motivation,
  - internal locus of control,
  - high self-efficacy,
  - adequate study skills for college success,
  - a belief that learning is not simply memorizing, and
  - a history of active learning.

Measuring Student Success Factors
College Student Inventory

- The College Student Inventory (CSI) identifies the leading non-cognitive indicators of students' success.

- information about students' academic motivations, levels of risk in a range of areas, and receptivity to your assistance.

- Allows you to intervene with students earlier, when the chance for success is greater.

- Makes retention strategies more effective and efficient by basing them on reliable student data.

- https://www.ruffalonl.com/upload/Student_Retention/RMS/Student%20X%20CSI%20and%20MYSA%20Reports%20-%20handout.pdf

CSI Summary scores are expressed on a stanine scale: 1 = very low, 5 = average, 9 = very high

- Study Habits
- Intellectual Interests
- Verbal and Writing Confidence
- Desire to Finish College
- Attitude Toward Educators

- Sociability
- Family Emotional Support
- Opinion Tolerance
- Career Closure
- Sense of Financial Security

Identity Development

- Chickering and Reisser's (1993) *Theory of Identity Development* suggests that students' progress through a series of seven vectors that interact and build upon each other.

- 1) *Developing competence*,

- 2) *Managing emotions*,

- 3) *Moving from autonomy to interdependence*,

- 4) *Developing mature interpersonal relationships*,

- 5) *Establishing identity*,

- 6) *Developing purpose*, and

- 7) *Developing integrity*

Student Thriving

- The *growing dominance of the psychological research paradigm* has resulted in a major reduction in attention to the socialization influences of institutions and campus environments, which is the essential focus of our proposed study.

- A focus on student thriving provides a measure of the academic, social, and psychological aspects of a student's college experiences that are most predictive of:
  - academic success,
  - institutional fit,
  - satisfaction with college, and . . .
  - ultimately graduation.

Thriving Quotient (TQ^{TM})

The 25 items on the TQ^{TM} cluster onto 5 scales:

- 1) <u>*Engaged Learning*</u> – a measure of the degree to which students are meaningfully processing what happens in class, energized by what they are learning, and continuing to think about it outside of class,

- 2) <u>*Academic Determination*</u> – a measure of students' goal-directedness, investment of effort, and regulation of their own learning and use of time,

- 3) <u>*Positive Perspective*</u> – a measure of students' optimism, and explanatory style,

- 4) <u>*Social Connectedness*</u> – a measure of students' involvement in healthy relationships and social support networks, whether on or off campus; and

- 5) <u>*Diverse Citizenship*</u> – a measure of students' desire to make a difference in the community around them, as well as their openness to differences in others

A Shift in Perspective – The Thriving Quotient – Dr. Laurie Schneider

From:

- Surviving

- Who you are and where you've been.

- Target the weakness and fix it.

- Failure prevention.

To:

- Thriving

- Who you can become and where you're going.

- Target the talent and build on it.

- Success promotion

Why Thriving?

- Implies more than mere survival

- Psychological well-being + academic success

- Thriving is an active word suggesting students are vitally engaged, optimally functioning.

- Shift from success to thriving is an ongoing process

- Thriving incorporates more than academic success and persistence to graduation. It includes:
  - citizenship,
  - relationships, and . . .
  - openness to diversity

What Aligned Learning Communities Have in Common

- *i. Shared knowledge*. By requiring students to take courses together and organizing those courses around a theme, learning communities seek to construct a shared, coherent curricular experience that is not just an unconnected array of courses.

- *ii. Shared learning*. By asking students to construct knowledge together, learning communities seek to involve students both socially and intellectually in ways that promote cognitive development as well as an appreciation for the many ways in which one's own knowing is enhanced when other voices are part of that learning experience.

- *iii. Shared responsibility*. Learning communities ask students to become responsible to each other in the process of trying to know.
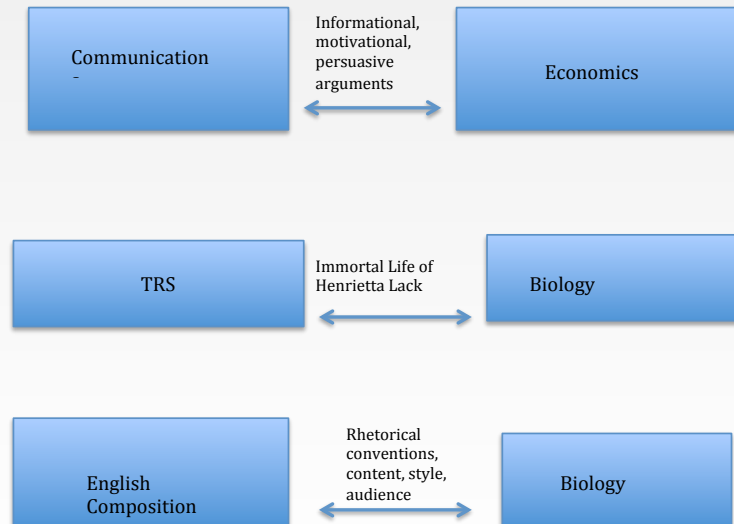
Aligned Learning Communities

- Tinto (2003; 1997; 1995) outlines a number of substantive findings on the effectiveness of aligned learning communities.

- *First*, students in aligned learning communities tended to form their own self-supporting groups, which extended beyond the classroom.

- *Second*, aligned learning community students became more actively involved in classroom learning, even after class.

- *Third*, participation in an aligned learning community enhances the quality of student learning.

- *Finally*, collaborative learning settings foster what could be called "the norms of educational citizenship," promoting the notion that individual educational welfare is tied inexorably to the educational welfare and interests of other members of the educational community
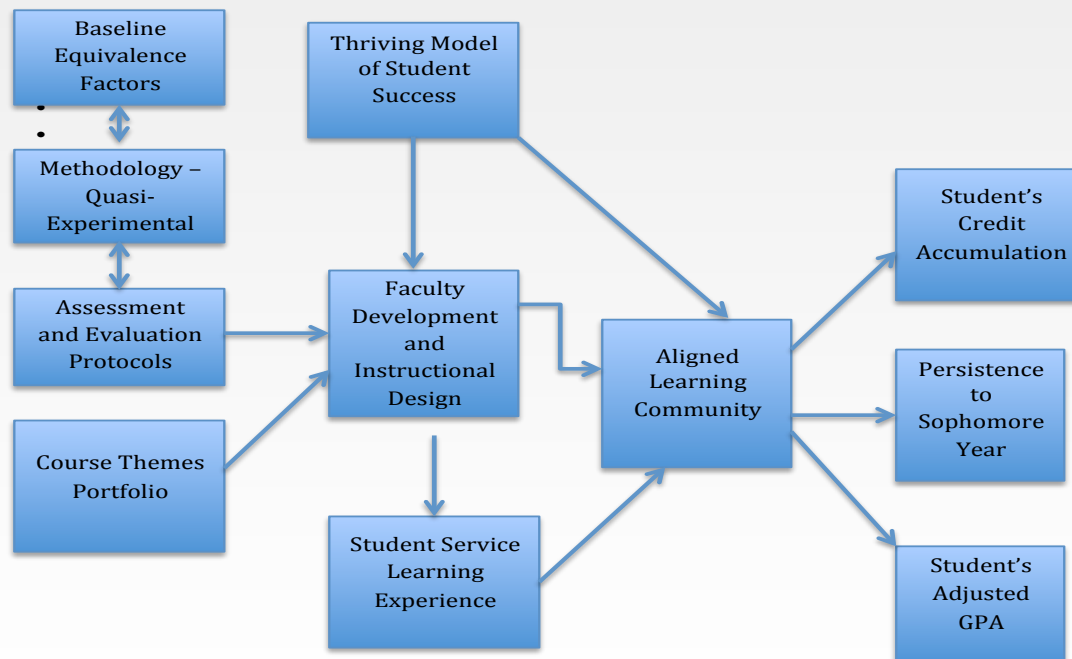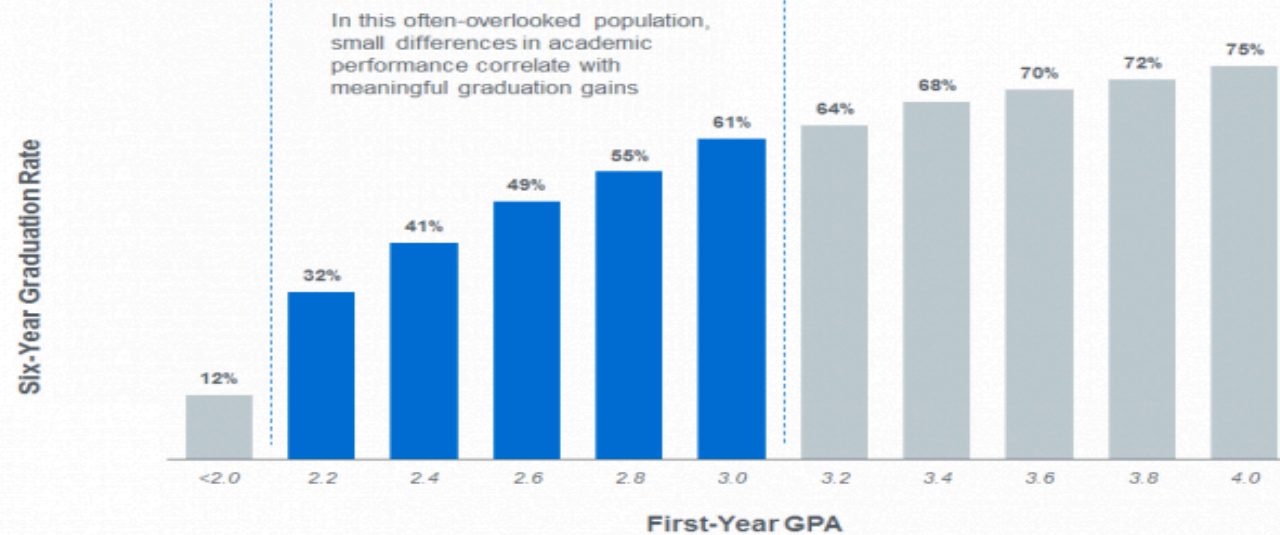
Examples of possible Aligned Learning Communities

Communication	Informational, motivational, persuasive arguments	Economics

TRS	Immortal Life of Henrietta Lack	Biology

English Composition	Rhetorical conventions, content, style, audience	Biology

Project Concept Map

The "Murky Middle"

The "Murky Middle"

The 'Murky Middle' – remarks by Ed Venit, Educational Advisory Board

- Colleges lose the biggest share of students in their first year, so institutions direct most of their student-success resources to freshmen.

- Such resources include tutoring, mentoring programs or other interventions. "That's where everyone's devoting a lot of attention," Venit said. "But we're not moving the dial."

- Many students complete their first year but leave without a degree.

- Forty-five percent of total dropouts nationwide finish a year of college and with a grade-point average between 2.0 and 3.0.

What does the Project Need From You?

- Beginning in Spring 2017 at mid-term, and going forward each subsequent spring semester for the duration of the FITW project:
  - Provide all first year students in your classes with Internet links to CSI and TQ surveys for post-test administration.