

RESEARCH SUMMARY

IN PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE

**HACC, Central Pennsylvania's
Community College**
LANCASTER, PENNSYLVANIA

*Steelcase Education Active
Learning Grant Recipient,
Cycle 1*

“In analyzing the data, it is clear that increases in student engagement and faculty enthusiasm were achieved through the use of the collaborative [ALC] classroom.”

HACC Annual Report

HACC, Central Pennsylvania's Community College, is not only the state's oldest community college – it may be one of the most avid adaptors of new norms and technologies. HACC is a champion of blended learning, combining dozens of heavily subscribed online courses and text books with in-person learning encounters.

In 2015, the community college was awarded a Steelcase Education Active Learning Center (ALC) Grant to design and furnish a former exercise room that had been recently converted into a 28-student multipurpose classroom. HACC chose a blended classroom style that emphasizes choice and control, with mobile Verb tables and whiteboards, Node seating and integrated technology.

HACC designed and carried out a rigorous study to measure how well the new “collaborative classroom” supported student engagement, faculty enthusiasm and student success – comparing results with those reported in standard classrooms. Student perceptions were gauged using a student evaluation of educational quality (SEEQ), and success was determined by the percent of students achieving an A-to-C letter grade in their coursework.

A LEARNING YEAR

For the 2015-16 academic year, researchers tracked progress among 170 students in 14 courses across an assortment of business, education, English, math, marketing, sociology

and college success subjects. Results were mixed: Students scored their own engagement and their professors' level of enthusiasm high in both the collaborative and traditional classrooms, and grades showed similar levels of success.

Researchers attributed these modest gains to the fact that the classroom was not yet fully installed by the start of the first semester, and also observed that students and faculty may not have had adequate training in how to best use the new classroom equipment. In response, HACC provided additional faculty training, facilitated discussions on best practices and provided assistance from an instructional designer.

ACHIEVING AT NEW LEVELS

The investment in training paid off. For the 2016-17 year, researchers studied progress among 170 students in 15 courses spanning subjects including health, communication, education, English, math and college success. By the conclusion of that year, the differences in engagement and enthusiasm among students and faculty using the classroom designed for collaboration were much

22.5%

**INCREASE IN STUDENT SUCCESS
IN COLLEGE ALGEBRA**

more pronounced. And students who noted these improvements were generally more likely to earn a C or better.

For the second year in the new classroom, HACC also experimented in blended learning, adding the collaborative classroom experience to its mobile learning curricula for its college algebra class. Results exceeded expectations when 73.9 percent of students in this class earned an A-to-C grade compared to their peers in non-mobile, non-collaborative classrooms – a 22.4 percent increase in success.

A CULTURE OF EXCELLENCE

From the outset, HACC sought to use the ALC grant as an opportunity to enhance teaching and learning, professional development and operations. By the end of year two, the college demonstrated this well, not only in the final student scores, but also in its own capacity to adapt from one year to the next in pursuit of excellence.

Administrators say that the process of implementing the grant created a culture and demand for more collaborative, active and blended learning experiences among students, staff and faculty. And two more spaces are being created to meet this demand.