

Life Skills: Fostering Student Development through an Academic Framework

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Session Overview

- I. Background of course
- II. Overview of course curriculum
- III. Examination of data
- IV. Closing

Profile of UCLA Undergraduates and their Mental Health

- At entry (Source: CIRP 2004)
 - 53% report feeling depressed “occasionally” or “frequently” in the past year
 - 87% report feeling “overwhelmed by all I have to do” at least occasionally in the past year
 - 52% anticipate that there is “some” or a “very good chance” that they will seek personal counseling while in college

Profile of UCLA Undergraduates and their Mental Health

- During college
 - 49% report having “some” or “a lot of trouble” handling stress (Source: UCUES 2004)
 - 34% experience Anxiety, 22% Depression, and 27% Psychological Distress at least “some of the time” (RAND Scale Measures; Source: 2002 Ashe Center Student Survey)

Impetus for Life Skills

- Evidence of increasing stress, mental health concerns
- Effects of social integration and emotional intelligence on persistence, retention and ability to manage change & transition

History of Life Skills

- Designed to assist undergraduates in navigating the developmental challenges of the college years.
 - Primary purpose has remained the same through all course iterations.

Life Skills for College Women and Men

“Success in the undergraduate experience is very much influenced by attributes beyond intellectual competence. Emotional and social competencies play important roles as well. Life Skills for College Women & Men explores student development in the undergraduate experience, providing an opportunity for you to learn about yourself, your peers, and issues confronting contemporary college students.”
(CHS 179/Life Skills course syllabus)

Life Skills for College Women and Men



Research Design

- Evolution of evaluation of the course
- Design of pre- and post-tests
- Administration and response rate

Stress and Coping

- Increase:
 - Comfortable asking others for support
 - Coping skills work well for me
 - Have healthy strategies for relieving stress
 - Self rating of emotional health
- Decrease:
 - Have to rely on self
 - Unable to successfully cope with change
 - Dwell on feelings

Academic Year 04-05 Data

RAND Mental Health Scales

- Increase:
 - Overall Mental Health Index
 - Psychological Wellbeing
 - Positive Affect
- Decrease:
 - Psychological Distress
 - Depression

Academic Year 04-05 Data

Identity Development

- Increase:
 - Important to be knowledgeable about cultural differences
 - Have friends who are different from me (ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, etc.)
 - Easy to develop new friendships
 - Easy to make new friends at UCLA
 - Able to challenge aspects of my upbringing not supportive of my wellbeing

Academic Year 04-05 Data

Identity Development

- Increase:
 - Self ratings:
 - Drive to achieve
 - Leadership
 - Social self confidence
 - Understanding of others

Academic Year 04-05 Data

Communication and Relationships

- Increase:
 - Confident communicating with others
 - Confident communicating with people different from me
 - Comfortable communicating about sex
 - When upset, can articulate what is bothering me
 - Have skills to communicate needs to others
 - Confident in ability to address difficult situations/concerns with others

Academic Success

- Increase:
 - Have what it takes to succeed at UCLA
 - Confident in ability to handle academic demands at UCLA
 - Have critical thinking skills necessary to solve problems
 - Self rating:
 - Academic ability
 - Intellectual self-confidence

Future Research Directions

- Continue Quantitative Data Collection
 - Create new sub-modules on particular topics to be explored periodically
 - Assess comparison groups
- Qualitative Component
 - Assess skill use/integration of content during class and after
 - Series of open-ended questions to be administered at several time points over course of academic year

Questions?