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Using a Business Simulation as an Integrative Assignment in a Learning Community

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Using a Business Simulation as an Integrative Assignment in a Learning Community

Kathleen Gurley and Dothang Truong
Fayetteville State University
HBCU Summit on Retention, March, 2009
Learning Communities

- Washington Center Summer Institute
  - Early emphasis on retention & engagement
  - Deeper learning (Lardner & Malmarich, 2008)

- HBCU Faculty Development Network
  - 13% of HBCUs were using L.C.s (Dawkins, 2006)

- Harvard Interdisciplinary Studies Project
  - Integration of disciplinary knowledge
  - Application in novel situations (Mansilla, 2004)
Business Curriculums

- Gulf Between Academia and Real World
  - Empirical positivism less effective with ambiguous problems (Joseph and George, 2002)

- Experiential Nature of Knowledge
  - Guides business executives in decisions (Homan, 2000)
  - Active versus passive learning (Albrecht, 2000)

- Artificial Disciplinary Boundaries Cause Fragmented Approach (Albrecht & Sacs, 2000)
  - Cross functional problem solving (Hakkarainen et al, 2004)
Purpose and Methodology

- Evaluate the Effectiveness of a Business Simulation as an Integrative Assignment
  - Learning community with Strategic Management and Operations Management
- Improved Learning on Content
  - Questionnaire administered in learning community and traditional sections
- Use of Simulation as an Integrative Assignment
  - Mansilla’s integrative assignment rubric
Micromatic Business Simulation

- Marketing
- Distribution & Sales
- Profit or Loss
- Manufacturing
- Workforce Planning
Learning Environment

- Learning community: Back to Back Courses
  - Once a week focused on simulation
- Every Week Decisions Were Processed
  - Reports provided of performance measures for all teams
- Faculty Acted as Banker or Board Member
  - Teams explained their decisions
- Two Practice Rounds to Start
Final Paper

- Business strategy
- Marketing decisions
  - Support strategy
- Production performance
  - Control of manufacturing COGS
  - Workforce productivity
  - Inventory
- Finance decisions
- Learnings
## Evaluation of Final Papers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Strat Mgmt Knowledge</th>
<th>Oper Mgmt Knowledge</th>
<th>Degree of Integration</th>
<th>Degree of Reflection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mastery</td>
<td>Mastery</td>
<td>Mastery</td>
<td>Mastery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Developing</td>
<td>Introductory</td>
<td>Introductory</td>
<td>Introductory</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mastery</td>
<td>Developing</td>
<td>Developing</td>
<td>Developing</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mastery</td>
<td>Developing</td>
<td>Mastery</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Introductory</td>
<td>Developing</td>
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<td>Developing</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Developing</td>
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## Student Engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>No of Students</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time spent on course</td>
<td>Learning Community</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>.44</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Interaction with instructors</td>
<td>Learning Community</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>.11</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>.53</td>
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</table>
## Content Knowledge

<table>
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<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>No of Students</th>
<th>Mean (% correct)</th>
<th>Std Dev</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strat Mgmt Content</td>
<td>Learning Community</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>59.2%</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>.04</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Traditional Strat Mgmt</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>25.0</td>
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<td>Oper Mgmt Content</td>
<td>Learning Community</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>69.7%</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>.00</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Traditional Oper Mgmt</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>38.2%</td>
<td>17.9</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
DISCUSSION

- Early Mistakes Decreased Student Effort
  - Greater faculty oversight
- Simulation Did Provide Integration and Reflection
  - Quarterly results and reflection
  - Financial results require integration
- Surprised at Student Engagement Results
- Simulation Created Active Learning
  - Traditional course format more abstract
Conclusion

- Simulation Good Fit With Learning Community
- Improved Learning and Integration
- Time Required for Simulation Justified If Deeper Learning