ACADEMIC RIGOR FOCUS GROUP

MISSOURI VALLEY COLLEGE
Two students (Stefany Prindle and Twyla Reid) and one faculty member (Susan Dittmer) assisted in developing a student survey to be conducted at Missouri Valley College.

Once the survey was proofed by another faculty member (Dr. Tamara King) and 1 administrator (Dr. Sharon Weiser), they ran a face-to-face sample survey to detect errors.

Errors were corrected then it was placed on Survey Monkey (opened Thursday 9/26/13; through 9/30/13).

61 students responded. During that survey students were asked if they would be willing to participate in the process of analyzing the results of the survey.

Six students agreed and participated in the final processes. Those participating were: Stefany Prindle, Twyla Reid, Samantha Creason, Emily Writer, Mathilde Meyenberg, and Audra Taylor.
PURPOSE OF OUR FOCUS GROUP

- See what an excellent/rigorous course looks like at Valley
  - Getting the most out of the abilities of
    - Students
    - Faculty
- How do we achieve that?
- We called together some interested students to draft a survey, analyze the answers and develop recommendations for you!
- What is Academic Rigor?? Twyla Reid
1. WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING MOST ACCURATELY DESCRIBES YOUR STATUS?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Count</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshman (1-27 hrs)</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore (28-57 hrs)</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior (58-87 hrs)</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior (88+ hrs)</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>17</td>
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</table>
2. MAJOR-NO CORRELATIONS
3. WHAT IS YOUR CUMULATIVE GPA?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GPA Range</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Count</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 to 1.9</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0 to 2.5</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 to 3.0</td>
<td>3.0 25.4%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 to 3.5</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.6 to 4.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>37.3%</strong></td>
<td><strong>22</strong></td>
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4. ON AVERAGE, HOW MUCH STUDY TIME DO YOU SPEND PER WEEK FOR A 3-CREDIT HOUR COURSE?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Time (hrs)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Count</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 hrs</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 2 hrs</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 to 4 hrs</td>
<td>41.0%</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 6 hrs</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 to 9+ hrs</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>1</td>
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5. WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING YOU CAN DO TO BE ACADEMICALLY SUCCESSFUL?

- Common Threads:
  - Study
  - Attend class
  - Participate
  - Be attentive

6. WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING YOUR PROFESSOR CAN DO TO HELP YOU BE ACADEMICALLY SUCCESSFUL?

- Be interactive, don’t read from text or Power Points
- Clarify assignments and deadlines
- Be enthusiastic/engaging
- Supply outside help
7. THINK BACK TO A CLASS IN WHICH YOU FELT BORED AND UNMOTIVATED. WHAT COULD BE DONE DIFFERENTLY TO MAKE IT MORE INTERESTING?

- Show enthusiasm
- Be interactive
- Engage us

8. IF YOU HAD A SUGGESTION IN THE PREVIOUS QUESTION ABOUT MAKING THE CLASS MORE INTERESTING, IS THIS SOMETHING THE INSTRUCTOR HAD OPTIONS TO CORRECT?

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<tr>
<td><strong>Yes</strong></td>
<td><strong>84.5%</strong></td>
<td><strong>49</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No</strong></td>
<td><strong>15.5%</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
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9. WHAT COULD MISSOURI VALLEY COLLEGE DO TO BETTER HELP YOU SUCCEED ACADEMICALLY?

More tutoring
Information on programs available

10. DO YOU THINK YOUR STUDIES AT MVC ARE ADEQUATELY PREPARING YOU FOR YOUR DESIRED CAREER AFTER COLLEGE?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>68.3%</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
<td>19</td>
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11. PLEASE EXPLAIN YOUR ANSWER. AN ARRAY OF ANSWERS.. A MUST READ!
MVC STRENGTHS—MATHILDE MEYENBERG

- MVC has implemented consequences to encourage attendance
- Students know they need to study
- Small institution
- Personalized education
- Professors care about students
- Good advisors
- Teachers are there for you
- Teachers are pretty easy to talk to
- There is tutoring available
- General willingness of teachers to help outside class
- Diverse
- All students have the books for class
- Study tables are required by some groups
- The Blosser program is an opportunity for academic success
MVC WEAKNESSES – STEFANY PRINDLE

- **Students Unchallenged:**
  - Students can do the bare minimum and still pass
  - Can get “A” without going to class
  - Time management

- **Teacher issues:**
  - Teachers are not interactive
  - Too many PowerPoints
  - Teachers who do not make their own PPT’s
  - Too many different websites to find/turn in assignments
  - Lack of standard behavior expectations
  - Not all information is available on the Syllabus
  - Not teaching to all three learning styles
  - Teachers who do not email students back
  - Teach to test and not to retain
MVC OPPORTUNITIES—EMILY WRITER

- Teachers could be more available
- Classroom size is ideal for class discussion
- Real-world experiences
- Challenge good students to strive harder (ex: continue to build the Honors program)
- Focus teaching to the more attentive students
- The textbook is a very good resource
MVC THREATS - TWYLA REID

- Procrastination by students
- Teachers lack of consistency in rules
- Feeling that they can get by with bare minimum
- Testing type
- School is putting too much emphasize on sports
- Prioritizing by students
- Slippery slope
  - Continually teaching to “middle or below” students
RECOMMENDATIONS--
SAM CREASON &
POINT LOMA UNIVERSITY, SAN DIEGO, CA
HTTP://WWW.POINTLOMA.EDU/EXPERIENCE/ACADEMICS/CENTERS-INSTITUTES/CENTER-TEACHING-LEARNING/TEACHING-TIPS/8-WAYS-ENGAGE-STUDENTS

1. Emphasize the most critical concepts continuously
2. Provide a visual aid to explain abstract concepts
3. Rely on logic
4. Use in-class activities to reinforce newly presented material.
5. Help students create a "link" between new material and something already learned
6. Help students master the vocabulary
7. Treat students with respect
8. Hold students to a high standard
9. Don't assume the worst about your students
   • Be relentlessly hopeful
   • Be sympathetic and hold your ground.
10. Be enthusiastic!
FOCUS GROUP EXTRAS

1. Be available
2. Adjust your teaching to include all learning styles
3. Be interactive
4. PowerPoint is not the end all
5. Avoid excessive use of technology