Student learning can be assessed at many points in a student’s educational career. It can take place during a course, at the completion of a course, a program (for example a capstone project or exam at the end of a major) or when the student obtains their degree (for example, exit exams). At LPC we have chosen to assess student learning at the course level and use that data to show learning at the Program and Degree level. However, there are other methods we can use to assess student learning that are less direct but offer insight into student learning. While direct measures are seen as the most robust, indirect measures can be used to support the findings of direct measures. These research briefs report the results of one of those indirect measures: student-self reports of their own learning. More specifically, this Brief examines the areas of greatest and lowest expectations as reported by students. In other words, the extent to which students expected to learn various skills, knowledge, and abilities at LPC.

Executive Summary

• Areas of highest expectation focus on academic skills and knowledge such as writing and math skills and critical thinking
• Students report making fewer gains in math skills (see the 1st Research Brief in this series) but expected to do so at LPC. Conversely, students report making gains in accepting responsibility for their actions but didn’t expect to.
• With the exception of Computer/Technology skills, areas of lowest expectation are affective (e.g., recognizing my own biases and values) or related to civic engagement and societal contribution (e.g., awareness of my civic or community responsibilities). These are also areas in which student report the lowest gains.

Methodological Background
Thirty-four self-reported areas of academic and affective development were connected to the five College Core Competencies. While student self-reported gains are not direct evidence of learning they do provide us with the students’ perception of their learning and are useful in assessing what and how much students learn, as described in our first research brief. In the 2005 and 2007 student surveys, we then asked students to report the extent their growth in each outcome area was attributable to LPC (i.e., a result of their time here). We reported that students attributed lowest levels of growth primarily in affective areas (with the exception of computer/technology skills). We hypothesized that perhaps students do not attend Community college to gain these outcomes so they do not attribute growth to LPC. We suggested future research would be helpful to unpack these relationships. Thus, in 2009, we asked students to report the extent to which they had expected to learn/gain each of these outcomes while here at LPC.

Survey
This data comes from the 2009 Student Satisfaction Survey administered to a random sample of courses in the Fall of 2009. Approximately 1350 students responded to the in-class survey. Students were asked to how much progress they had made in 34 areas of knowledge, skills, and abilities since they first enrolled at LPC. The findings of these survey questions were reported in the first Research Brief. Students were then asked how much of their growth in these outcomes they had expected to gain while attending LPC. The possible responses were: Not at all (1), Somewhat (2), A lot(3).

Analysis: Means
Means were run for each of the possible areas of expectation. Means were then ordered highest to lowest. Tables 1 and 2 display the outcomes which students most expected to gain while at LPC and those that they least expected to gain while here.
Findings

Areas of highest expectation are related entirely to academics and job skills. While at LPC, students generally expect to learn or improve their writing, math, speaking, problem solving, critical thinking and research skills. They also expect to gain or improve job/career skills as well career goals. Notably, many of these outcomes were found to be areas in which students reported the greatest growth, with the exception of mathematical skills which is among the lowest self-reported gains (see Research Brief 1).

The mean score for all these expectations was greater than 2. Thus, on average, students expected to gain these outcomes at LPC somewhat or a lot.

Areas of lowest expectation are related primarily to social, community, and interpersonal plus computer/technology skills. Many of these outcomes were also listed in Research Brief 1 among the areas of lowest growth. Thus, while students didn’t show as much growth in these areas, they also didn’t expect to.

The mean score for all these expectations was less than 2. Thus, on average, students didn’t expect to gain these outcomes at all or somewhat.

It should be noted that the literature on student development in higher education shows that students do gain in affective and civic/community skills, knowledge and behaviors as a result of higher education. Yet, it’s interesting that LPC students do not expect/want to. As noted in Brief 1 in this series, they do perceive gain in these areas—just not as much as in other areas. It’s unclear if they truly are not learning these skills as much as other skills/abilities or if they simply are unaware of their gains due to the fact that they are not expecting to learn these skills.

The next Research Brief in this series examines self-reported gains by background/demographic variables such as GPA, Gender, Race and Satisfaction with LPC.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Highest Self-Reported Expectations</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing Skills</td>
<td>2.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematical skills and abilities</td>
<td>2.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills I can use in my current or future career</td>
<td>2.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
<td>2.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing clear career goals</td>
<td>2.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral communication and speaking skills</td>
<td>2.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applying knowledge to new situations to solve problems</td>
<td>2.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gathering information from multiple sources</td>
<td>2.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to learn on my own, pursue ideas and find info.</td>
<td>2.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using logic to draw conclusions from information</td>
<td>2.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: Lowest Self-Report Expectations</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation for the arts and the role art plays in society</td>
<td>1.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation of my role in a democratic society</td>
<td>1.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of my civic or community responsibilities</td>
<td>1.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to contribute to my community/society</td>
<td>1.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognizing my own biases and values</td>
<td>1.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall technological literacy</td>
<td>1.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to use computers effectively</td>
<td>1.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to meet challenges of a rapidly-changing society</td>
<td>1.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepting responsibility for my own actions</td>
<td>1.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness/ appreciation of diverse cultures/ ways of life</td>
<td>1.94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>