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## Undergraduate Survey, 2009-10

# Learning Communities Members Report Greater Satisfaction Benefits

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In the 2008-09 academic year, Loyola began to give incoming freshmen the opportunity to participate in a Learning Community. Every year a set of Learning Communities is available, each on a separate topic. In 2009-10, 197 freshmen participated in eight Learning Communities.<sup>1</sup> Students in each Learning Community live together on the same dorm floor,<sup>2</sup> take University 101 and two Core courses together, take part in faculty-organized activities in the city, and have two Peer Advisors.

The Undergraduate Survey is administered at Loyola every spring. It contains questions on satisfaction with various aspects of the Loyola experience, including academics, services, and resources.

Because of the special characteristics of Learning Communities, participating students may look different from non-members in some ways. For this report, differences between Learning Community members and non-members in 2009 and 2010 are analyzed in five areas of satisfaction in which differences might be expected: value of education, faculty, Core, sense of community, and housing. In each of these five areas, a summary index of satisfaction is calculated based on a relevant set of questions. The summary indices are on a scale from 0 (not at all satisfied) to 10 (very satisfied). The questions themselves are on a scale from 0 (not at all satisfied) to 4 (very satisfied).

Differences between Learning Community members and non-members in these summary indices are presented, as well as differences in the results of the questions underlying the indices. Results for 2009 are compared with those for 2010.

### Key findings

#### Value of education

- In both 2009 and 2010, Learning Community (LC) members were more satisfied overall with the value of a Loyola education than were non-members (see Table 1 and Figure 1). In 2010, non-members

<sup>1</sup> There are six Learning Community topics; because of demand, two topics were split into two Communities.

<sup>2</sup> There is one Learning Community that includes commuter students, as well.

averaged 7.2 on the summary satisfaction index (on a scale from 0 to 10), while LC members averaged 7.7.

- In 2009, results for each individual question on the value of a Loyola education indicated greater satisfaction on the part of LC members, compared to non-members.
- By 2010, the only differences remaining between the two groups were in satisfaction with the academic experience at Loyola and with having chosen a Loyola education.
- Among non-members, satisfaction with being well-prepared for further education increased significantly from 2009 to 2010, narrowing the gap between the two groups.
- The disappearance of differences in the other three of six questions was due to very small shifts in satisfaction, changes that were small enough to be statistically insignificant, but large enough to erase the differences by 2010.

#### Faculty

- In 2009, the summary satisfaction index for Faculty was 6.9 for non-members and 7.7 for members. By 2010, the index had increased to 7.4 for non-members (see Figure 2). This increase was sufficient to erase the significant difference between the two groups by 2010.
- Satisfaction with the quality of teaching by regular faculty in the major increased for both groups from 2009 to 2010. In 2010, LC members were significantly more satisfied than were non-members.
- In 2009, LC members were more satisfied with relationships with faculty and with encouragement and motivation from faculty than non-members. Among non-members, satisfaction in these two areas increased between 2009 and 2010, while it decreased slightly for LC members, so that in 2010 there were no differences between LC members and non-members.

#### Core

- There were no differences in 2009 or 2010 between LC members and non-members in the summary satisfaction index for the Core (6.7 and 6.9 respectively, in 2010; see Figure 3).
- There were two small differences in 2009, with LC members more satisfied than non-members with the clarity of expected learning outcomes and with

quality of learning in Core courses. By 2010, however, those differences had disappeared.

### **Sense of Community**

- In both 2009 and 2010, there were substantial differences between LC members and non-members in overall Sense of community (7.7 and 7.0 in 2009 and 7.7 and 7.1 in 2010), with members more satisfied than non-members (see Figure 4).
- In both years, LC members were more satisfied with making friends.
- In 2009, LC members felt more like a member of the Loyola community, although this difference was gone by 2010.

### **Housing**

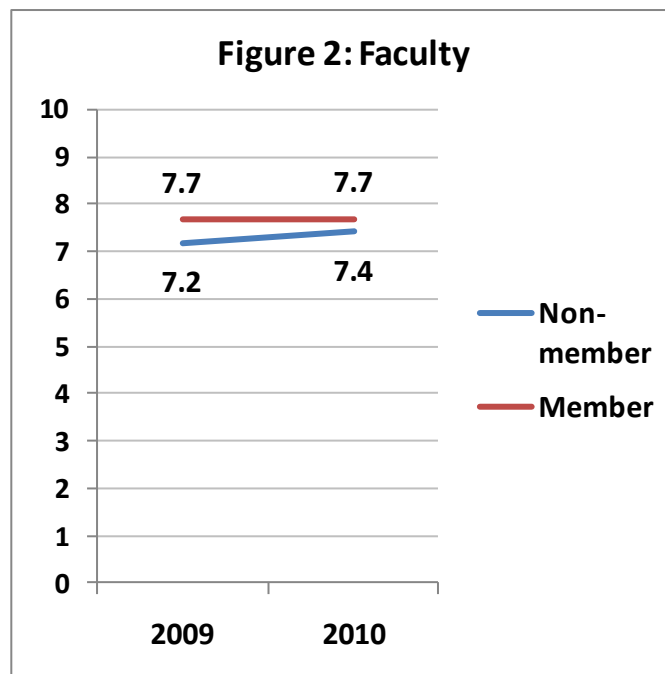
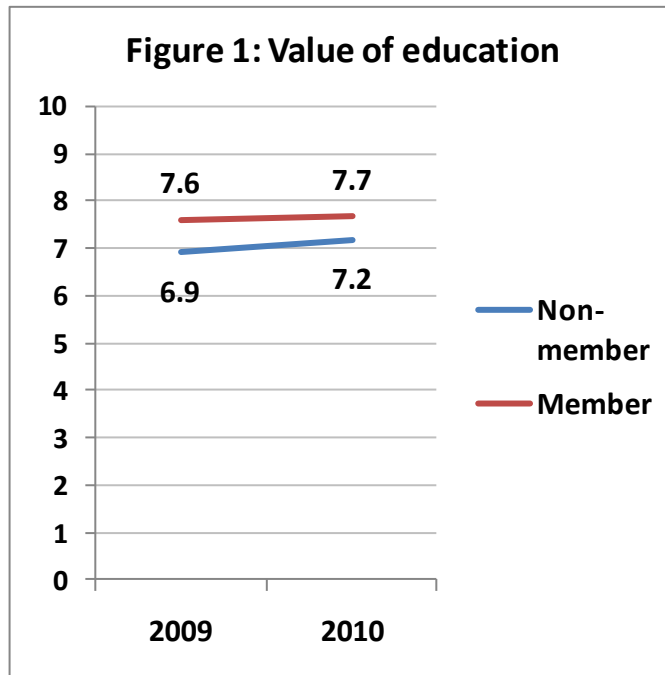
- There were no differences in the summary satisfaction index for Housing in either 2009 or 2010 (see Figure 5).
- Satisfaction with housing did increase for non-members between 2009 and 2010, including satisfaction with the Housing Office and with housing in general.

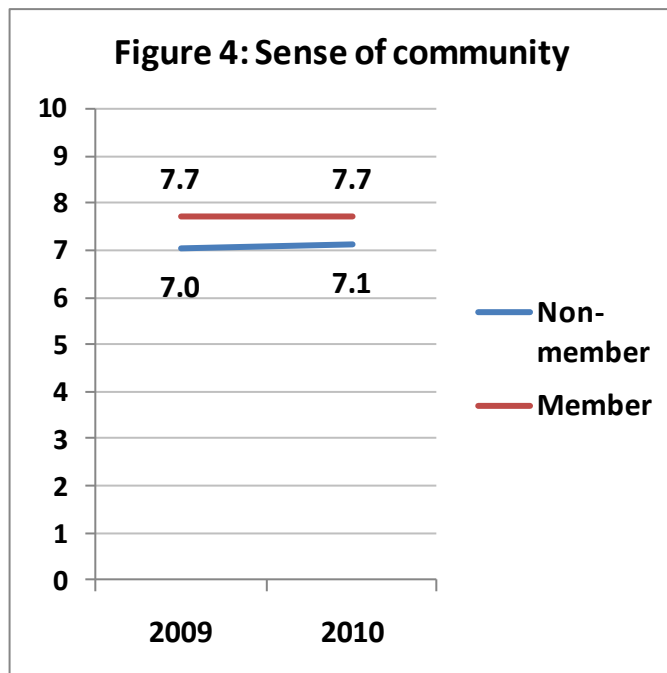
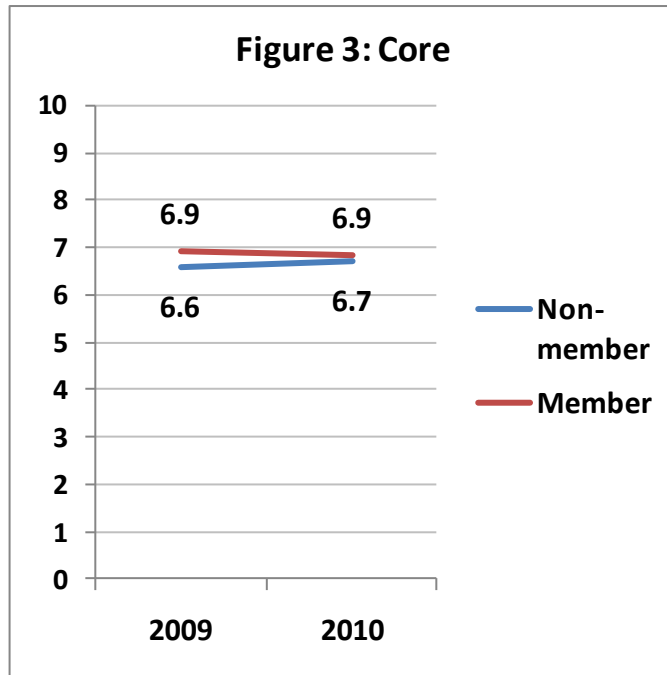
## **Conclusions**

- There were fewer differences between Learning Community members and non-members in 2010 than there were in 2009. In many cases, this is because non-members' satisfaction grew from 2009 to 2010, narrowing the gap between the two groups. Whether those changes in differences represent a pattern remains to be seen.
- In both years, LC members were substantially more satisfied with the value of their Loyola education than

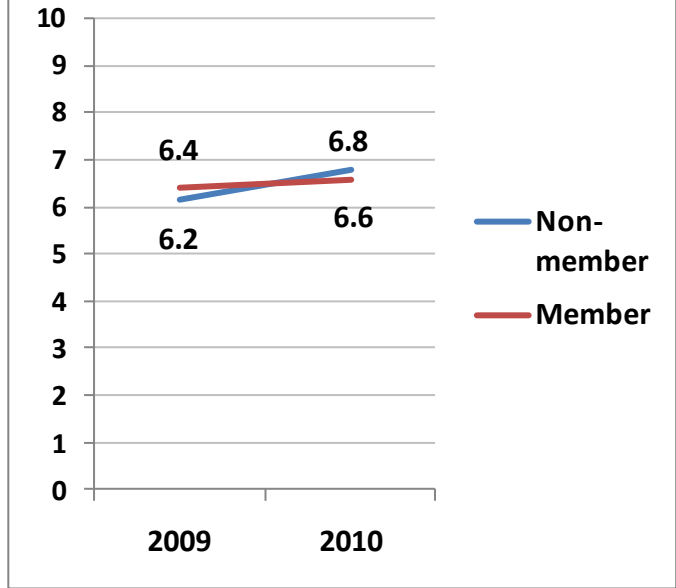
were non-members (although the gap narrowed slightly by 2010). This may be because of the University's overall investment in services and resources for the Learning Communities.

- Because of the extra contact with faculty, one might expect LC members to be more satisfied with faculty. Although this was true in 2009, however, it was not the case by 2010, as the satisfaction of non-members with faculty rose.
- By 2010, there were no differences in overall satisfaction with the Core. This suggests that taking Core courses as a cohort does not significantly increase satisfaction with the Core.
- Given the amount of time and the variety of contexts in which LC students interact with their fellow LC members, and given the extra attention they receive from staff and faculty, one would hope that they would have a strong sense of community. It is not surprising, then, that LC members have more of a sense of community than do non-members.
- That LC members live together on the same floor does not seem to lead to greater satisfaction than non-members with housing.
- Taken together, these results suggest that participating in a Learning Community has broad benefits in terms of students' perception of their overall education and sense of community. It does not seem to have much effect on satisfaction with faculty, the Core, or housing.
- However, Learning Communities may provide other important benefits, besides satisfaction, that are not measured here. Although difficult, it is important to measure additional outcomes that are related to the goals of the Learning Community program.





**Figure 5: Housing**



<b>Table 1</b>				
<b>Satisfaction Indices and Specific Measures, by Year and Membership in Learning Community</b>				
<i>Satisfaction indices: scale from 0 to 10</i> <i>Other satisfaction measures: scale from 0 to 4</i>	2009		2010	
	Learning community		Learning community	
	Non-member	Member	Non-member	Member
	<i>Average</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Average</i>
<b>Value of education index</b>	6.9	7.6	7.2	7.7
Academic experience at Loyola	2.8	3.1	2.9	3.1
Choosing Loyola education	2.9	3.2	2.9	3.2
Meeting/exceeding educational expectations	2.6	2.9	2.7	2.9
Best college education possible for you	2.7	2.9	2.8	3.0
Being well-prepared for further education	2.8	3.2	<b>3.0</b>	3.2
Academic experience as relates to career aspirations	2.8	3.0	2.9	3.1
<b>Faculty index</b>	7.2	7.7	<b>7.4</b>	7.7
Quality of teaching: regular faculty in major	3.0	3.1	<b>3.1</b>	3.3
Quality	3.0	3.1	<b>3.1</b>	3.2
Availability	3.0	3.1	3.1	3.2
Faculty-student communication	2.9	3.1	3.0	3.1
Relationships with faculty	2.7	3.1	<b>2.9</b>	2.9
Encouragement and motivation from faculty	2.6	3.0	2.7	2.9
<b>Core index</b>	6.6	6.9	6.7	6.9
Quality of teaching: regular faculty	2.8	2.9	2.9	2.9
Quality of teaching: part-time faculty	2.6	2.7	2.7	2.8
Availability of courses and options	2.6	2.7	2.5	2.7
Clarity of expected learning outcomes	2.6	2.9	2.7	2.6
Quality of learning in courses	2.7	2.9	2.7	2.8
Core curriculum	2.5	2.7	2.5	2.7
<b>Sense of community index</b>	7.0	7.7	7.1	7.7
Felt University offices cared	2.1	2.2	2.1	2.3
Making friends on campus	2.9	3.2	2.9	3.2
Feel like member of LUC community	2.0	2.3	2.1	2.3
<b>Housing index</b>	6.2	6.4	<b>6.8</b>	6.6
Housing Office	2.5	2.4	<b>2.7</b>	2.6
Housing	2.4	2.6	<b>2.7</b>	2.6

Source: Undergraduate Survey, 2009-10

Note: **Blue** indicates higher satisfaction among learning community members, at a .05 statistical significance level. **Bolded italics** indicate a statistically significant increase from 2009 to 2010.

Appendix A				
Number and Percent of Respondents by Year and Learning Community Membership				
	2009		2010	
	<i>Count</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>%</i>
Non-member	648	85.2	465	83.6
Member	113	14.8	91	16.4
Total	761	100.0	556	100.0

Source: Undergraduate Survey, 2009-2010