

Student experiences and Outcomes at MMU - *Results from Empirical, Longitudinal Studies*

2014-2015

To determine the extent to which Mount Mercy students' levels of socially-responsible leadership changed during this academic year, data were collected on their level of Citizenship at the beginning and end of their first year at the University. Citizenship is described as the degree to which an individual and group become responsibly connected to the community/society through leadership development. This measure taps into the Mount Mercy University goals of Serving the Common Good and Purposeful Living. To measure this construct, pretest Citizenship data were collected from most students new to the institution in the fall 2014 term (n=226/76.6% of the entering student body). The parallel Citizenship posttest was administered to the same students from the original sample who were still enrolled at Mount Mercy (n=194) as of April 2015. Of the 194 students still enrolled at Mount Mercy as of April 2015, 107 responded to the April posttest data collection (i.e., a 55% response rate).

There was a slight decline on the Citizenship measure from the beginning to the end of students' first year at Mount Mercy (4.43 to 4.16 on a five-point scale, respectively). This was expected, given similar pretest-posttest declines uncovered in the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education (WNS). Looking specifically at students attending liberal arts colleges, WNS researchers report an average of 4.0 and 3.96, respectively on the same pretest/posttest Citizenship survey – substantially lower than the Mount Mercy sample. Despite the decline among Mount Mercy students, two important educational practices led to actual gains in our students' levels of Citizenship. First, students reported an average of 3.14/5 on the degree to which they were exposed to difference (Interactional Diversity). Although the questions were slightly different, this is modestly higher than the mean for the interactional diversity measure assessed in the spring 2013 term (2.83/5). Next, students reported a mean of 3.03 (on a five-point scale) for community service/volunteering. Most importantly, prediction equations reveal that both of these measures were positively associated with gains in the Citizenship posttest measure, net of a host of potential confounding factors (e.g., GPA, race, sex, cumulative credits earned).

Highlights from 2014-15	Notable patterns and examples
Students' growth in the Mount Mercy goals of Serving the Common Good and Purposeful Living was measured by assessing changes in their levels of Citizenship development.	Although there was a slight decline in Citizenship levels among all students from the beginning to the end of this academic year (4.43/5 to 4.16/5, respectively), the following Mount Mercy educational experiences led to gains ¹ in this important measure: Interactional diversity, and community service/volunteering.

(Data collected and analyzed by Dr. Chad Loes, Director of Student Outcomes Research)

¹ It is important to note that the longitudinal design allows e to estimate actual gains in the outcome measure. This has been demonstrated empirically elsewhere, e.g., Pascarella, E.T., Wolniak, G.C., & Pierson, C.T. (2003). Explaining student growth in college when you don't think you are. *Journal of College Student Development*, 44(1), 122–126. doi: 10.1353/csd.2003.0007