Identifying Collaboration, Teamwork, and Leadership Practices on Campus

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Abstract

In support of the newly adopted Institutional Learning Outcomes of collaboration, teamwork, and leadership (CTL) at California State University, East Bay (CSUEB) the researchers surveyed employers, students, and the course catalogue to identify the frequency of student exposure to CTL in classes and co-curricular activities and the perceived importance of these competencies. Results were that employers highly valued and that students reported frequent exposure to these skills. A literature review revealed the growing importance of CTL in education with the recognition that more work was needed to identify CTL pedagogical best practices and instruct faculty on their use.

Keywords
collaboration, teamwork, leadership, education, teaching

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as one of its six core values, stated in the form of an Institutional Learning Outcome (ILO): "Graduates of CSUEB will be able to work collaboratively and respectfully as members and leaders of diverse teams and communities" (CSUEB Academic Senate, 2012).

Leading national educational organizations identify collaboration, teamwork, and/or leadership skills as essential for college graduates. e Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U, 2005), as part of a national advocacy and research initiative called "Liberal Education and America's Promise" (LEAP), has produced a list of essential learning outcomes for college students, one of which is teamwork and problem solving. e California State University, in Executive Order 1065, adopted the LEAP outcomes in September 2011 (Reed, 2011). In a 2013 survey of 318 employers con

ducted by Hart Research Associates for the AAC&U, 67% of employers stated that they wanted colleges to place more emphasis on teamwork and collaboration in diverse group settings. In the same survey, 74% of employer respondents stated that expecting students to develop the skills to conduct research collaboratively with their peers would be a new approach to learning that had the potential to help students succeed (Hart Research Associates, 2013).

The AAC&U (2009) also created a teamwork value rubric that involves assessing individuals on the following qualities: contributions to team meetings, facilitation of the contribution of team members, individual contributions made outside of team meetings, fostering of constructive team climate, and responding to conflict. Additionally, the Academic Advising and Career Education (AACE) department at CSUEB researched skills that Bay Area employers routinely seek

the intentional development of collaborative, team-based learning, and leadership skill in their students (Clark, 2010; CSUEB Workforce Roundtables, 2008; Drummond, 2012; Mabry, 2011). As CSUEB campus leaders came to consensus about the importance of teaching collaboration, teamwork, and leadership, it became clear that the university was uncertain about the degree to which students were exposed to CTL on campus as well as the ways in which Bay Area employers who hired CSUEB graduates used these skills in the work place.

Given the importance of CTL for college graduates, the current study sought to: (1) identify where students are exposed to CTL instruction or experiences in coursework and in co-curricular activities at CSUEB, (2) assess the value that two groups of stakeholders, students and employers, placed on CTL competencies, and (3) make preliminary recommendations regarding CTL instruction at CSUEB based upon a review of the external literature and opinions of CSUEB students and employers of CSUEB graduates. For the purposes of this study, collaboration, teamwork, and leadership were defined as follows:

Collaboration involves working with others cooperatively to solve problems, make decisions, or produce something that cannot easily be produced by someone acting alone (Zaccaro, Rittman & Marks, 2001). Collaboration requires the ability to communicate openly, to value and work with diversity, and to respond constructively to conflict (Larson and LaFasto, 1989). Collaboration can be short term and informal, or it can develop over time and with more formal agreements about how outcomes will be achieved.

Teamwork occurs where people interact to accomplish shared goals. Teamwork involves cooperating and coordinating to get work done in an interdependent fashion, with defined roles, and clear objectives (Kouzes and Posner, 2007; Levi, 2011). Team members are often selected on the basis of the knowledge, skills, and

Advising and Career Center employee. Job fair participants were asked to complete the survey at their convenience and return the survey to the researcher either at the completion of the job fair, in person, or through U. S. mail. The employer survey was a three-page hard-copy questionnaire that asked the employers to evaluate the importance of the abilities to collaborate, to work with a team, and to exercise leadership in their employees. The survey also included demographic questions. The assessment of CTL included both overall questions about CTL (e.g., "How important is the ability to collaborate when you consider hiring college graduates?") and questions about specific features of or skills involved in collaboration, teamwork, and/or leadership (e.g., "Rate the importance of the following competencies for success in your organization: the ability to actively listen"). The survey also included open-ended questions. Twenty-seven employers completed the survey. Employer respondents reported their type of business as follows: private company or publicly traded company (33.3%), non-profit organization (11.1%), government agency or municipality (25.9%), school, school district, college, or university (18.5%), or other (7.4%) -- (3.7% did not answer the question). Numeric results of the employer survey are presented in Table 1.

Results indicated that employers rated collaboration, teamwork, and leadership as very important competencies for their employees; each item on the questionnaire was rated higher than four (out of a maximum of five). Open-ended survey responses, described below, also revealed the importance that employers place on CTL skills and provided a vivid, real-world picture of the ways in which these skills were applied in the workplace.

Qualitative survey responses

In response to the question, "Which collaboration skills would you most like to see in college graduates?" the

to manage conict, and valuing and respecting the different cultures and opinions of others. In response to the following, "Describe... under what circumstances employees in your organization need to collaborate," the most frequent responses were program development, special projects, in support of the organization's mission and goals, for product development, process improvement, making decisions under pressure, addressing client concerns, and working in client communities.

In response to the question, "Which

mentioned frequently. In general, collaboration and teamwork skills were valued more highly than were leadership skills. In summary, employers in our survey valued highly the multi-dimensional ways that employees get work accomplished through working together and also valued employees' leadership behaviors whether or not in a formal leadership position.

Student Survey

A link to an online survey was sent to CSUEB students in the winter quarter of 2013. e survey was managed through the Oce of Planning and Institutional Research on campus and the software used was Qualtrics. e survey link was sent to 2940 CSUEB students (588 freshmen, 588 sophomores, 588 juniors, 588 seniors, and 588 graduate students), which represented 17% of the total CSUEB student body in winter 2013. A total of 877 (29.2 % of the 2940) started the survey and 690 (23.5%) completed the survey. One hundred sixty of the 877 were deleted because they did not answer any CTL questions. e nal sample consisted of 717 (24.4% of the 2940 recipients). e survey asked respondents to estimate how frequently they were exposed to CTL and related experiences in classes and co-curricular activities, the extent of their involvement in co-curricular activities, identication of CSUEB courses in which they were exposed to CTL, and their assessment of the degree to which their CTL experiences at CSUEB prepared them for the workforce and contributed to their personal growth. ey were asked to consider all quarters in which they were enrolled at CSUEB when answering these questions. e survey also included demographic questions. Most demographic characteristics of survey respondents, and demographic characteristics of CSUEB students in general, reported for comparison purposes, are presented in Table 2. Men are underrepresented in the current study (30.4% in current sample compared to 39% at CSUEB). Although ethnicity was assessed somewhat dierently for the current study compared to

Survey Item	Percentage
1. Please indicate the percentage (%) of courses which involved learning about or the course work required:	
1.1. Group work	50.55
1.2. Leadership	46.96
1.3. Teamwork/collaboration	55.29
1.4. Applying teamwork and leadership skills in a real-life setting	50.93
1.5. The in uence of diversity (culture, race, gender, or age) upon group behavior	55.78
1.6. Identi cation and resolution of con icts within groups	46.42
1.7. Collaboration and creative group brainstorming	53.36
1.8. Respecting the views of others in group settings	65.05
1.9. Importance of integrity and ethics when interacting in a group	62.72

Note: n for all items ranges from 612 to 687

Table 3: Results of Student Survey: Percentages for Survey Item #1

Course Catalog Survey

 e course catalog survey was conducted using the CSUEB 2011-2012 catalog. Each of the departments on campus was researched separately, a total of 88 programs, scanning for the following words in course descriptions: "leadership," "teamwork," "collaboration," and "group." Table 5 illustrates the incidences of these key words in course descriptions. e courses are organized by college.

As the table shows, course catalog descriptions generally make infrequent reference to the CTL terms we searched. is result is inconsistent with the student survey results presented in Table 3, which show that student survey respondents perceived that CTL experiences or instruction are present in the majority of courses.

Conclusions and Recommendations for Future Research and Practice

 is study represented a rst step toward understanding the prevalence of CTL instruction and exposure on college campuses, the value that students, faculty, and employers place on CTL instruction and exposure, and ultimately, the ways in which CTL may be e ectively taught. e current study speci cally addressed the prevalence of CTL on one college campus through surveying both students and the course catalog and the value that students at the campus and local employers place on CTL competencies. e student survey

style of leadership that is more transformational and collaborative in nature. e concept of trust was also found to be more identi able in relationships that were more relations-oriented and participative in nature between leaders and followers (Bass, 1990; McGregor, 1960). Fukuyama (1997) noted that those who do not trust each other will only work together under a system of formal rules and regulations. Such a lack of trust

quate time for the faculty to receive training (National Research Council, 2012). Universities should support o ces of faculty development on campuses in their training of faculty in teaching methods that may not be well known (e.g., the importance of sustained practice across courses and of clear articulation of learning goals in a course).

Conclusions

CSUEB students report frequent exposure to CTL experiences. e researchers were surprised to learn that students appear to be gaining experience with teamwork and collaboration in classes at a much higher rate than is represented in the course catalog; CTL instruction at CSUEB is partly "hidden" at present and it is expected that this is also true on other campuses. Although our students may be experiencing "sustained practice" in CTL on campus, there is not yet su cient evidence at CSUEB, or at universities in general, about the degree to which and the ways in which our CTL teaching practices are e ective. ere is a need for research that includes faculty members' reports of fre quency of CTL instruction, both "intentional" and for

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