For the 2009-2010 school year we have initiated a new learning community which is called the pre-med/pre-dent learning community. Students applied for the learning community through the Department of Housing and Residential Life. Any student who self-identified themselves as being pre-med or pre-dent (interested in applying to medical or dental school, respectively) could apply to the learning community, regardless of his/her choice of major. We currently have an initial cohort of 15 students participating in this inaugural pre-med/pre-dent learning community.

The learning community provides the following: all students are housed together in Smith Hall. A pre-med Peer Assistant was hired who also lives in Smith Hall. The peer assistant will help organize activities, speakers, study sessions etc. for the learning community participants. We have arranged for all members of the learning community to be co-enrolled in the following courses:

Fall 2009

BIO 1430 (Functional Biology) lecture

BIO 1430 (Functional Biology) lab

CHEM 1341 (General Chemistry I) lecture

CHEM 1141 (General Chemistry I) lab

US 1100 (University Seminar)

Spring 2010

BIO 1431 (Organismal Biology) lecture

BIO 1431 (Organismal Biology) lab

CHEM 1342 (General Chemistry II) lecture

CHEM 1142 (General Chemistry II) lab

There are several desired outcomes for this learning community, and I am interested in understanding whether participation in this learning community helps students achieve these outcomes.

The desired outcomes are:

1 – increased success in the co-enrolled first year science courses (biology and chemistry)

2 – increased retention at Texas State University

3 – increased submission of applications to medical or dental schools (usually done after junior year)

4 – increased acceptance rate into medical or dental schools

In order to track whether participation in the learning community will help students achieve these desired outcomes, I would also like to track a group of control students who are:

1 – enrolled in the same lecture sections of BIO 1430 and CHEM 1341 in the Fall, and BIO 1431 and CHEM 1342 in the Spring as the learning community participants

2 – also self-identify themselves as pre-med or pre-dent

3 – are not participating in the learning community.

Methods

At the beginning of the Fall 2009 semester I will hand out and then collect a brief form at the beginning of the designated BIO 1430 and CHEM 1341 lecture sections. The form will ask students to give their name, Texas State ID number and then ask them to check one box from a list based on which box they feel best describes them. The boxes will include the following categories:

Pre-Med

Pre-Dent

Pre-Vet (veterinary school)

Pre- PA (physician assistant program)

Pre-Optometry

Pre-Physical Therapy

Pre-Chiropractic

Pre-Pharmacy

Other Pre-Professional program \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Do not intend to apply to a professional program

(Note: I am a designated Pre-Health Advisor at Texas State and can also use the delivery of this form and the information the students provide to promote our services and encourage ALL pre-professional students to seek out the assistance of one of the Pre-Health Advisors.)

From the responses, I will choose a set of control students who meet the criteria listed above. I will try to match the two cohorts (learning community and control) in size and gender if possible.

Following the completion of the first school year I will access the grades earned by the two cohorts in the science courses listed above in order to track desired outcome # 1.

At the beginning of the 2010-2011 and the 2011-2012 school years I will assess whether each student in the two cohorts is still enrolled full time at Texas State in order to track desired outcome #2.

In my role as a Pre-Health Advisor I will have the ability to track desired outcomes # 3 and 4 two or three years from now. I have access to the various application services that students use to apply to all medical and dental schools. These application services generate databases that list the names of all Texas State students that apply and they also list the outcomes of their applications to various schools (rejected, interviewed, offer made, matriculated, etc.)