



Texas Success Center



Refocusing a Learning Frameworks Course to Increase Student Success

Channell Cook, M.S., M.S.

November 2022

Refocusing a Learning Frameworks Course to Increase Student Success

Introduction

The Learning Frameworks course (EDUC 1200) is a course offered at Lee College, a medium-sized community college in southeast Texas, for entering first-year students to improve their understanding of the learning process, increase awareness of student support services, and increase their ability to succeed in college. Some variation of this course, often referred to as a Freshman Seminar course, is offered at a variety of community colleges and universities nationwide (Hodges et al. 2019-b).

EDUC 1200 has been evolving at Lee College for several years. The original curriculum design was based on a toolbox model where students acquired tools for success, such as: finding college resources; setting specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-bound (SMART) goals; using Career Coach; understanding cultural wealth; assessing emotional intelligence; increasing financial literacy; and learning soft skills. In 2015, Lee College considered making changes to the EDUC 1200 class after hearing from students, faculty, and administrators. These changes were then part of Lee College's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) for accreditation. In what will be referred to as the previous curriculum, students were surveyed to gather their understanding and satisfaction with a six-question survey. Students were asked about their satisfaction with a variety of course features, such as advising, career exploration, access to campus services, skills building, and overall satisfaction. Students were also asked if they were influenced to change their majors or choose career paths based on their experiences in the course. There was resistance and complaints from faculty in various disciplines that the curriculum was too focused on selecting a career path, especially for non-traditional students and those seeking a technical degree, as they were more likely to already know what career paths they wanted to go into.

Additionally, students complained that many of the assignments were busy work. Faculty felt the course did not provide enough opportunities for critical thinking. In contrast, the administration felt the toolbox approach was not as effective as initially expected because it emphasized identifying tools but did not provide enough time to apply the tools to authentic academic tasks or evaluate their effectiveness. There were also some concerns from faculty in various disciplines that the curriculum focused too much on career exploration, did not have enough components requiring critical thinking, and did not meet the needs of the diverse student population at Lee College.

The goal of overhauling the course curriculum was to create a course that would be more universal and applicable to meet the needs of students seeking academic and technical degrees. The hope was for a course incorporating self-regulated learning practices and a Cultural Wealth Framework (Yosso, 2005) to enhance the student experience and lead to the better application of successful academic practices. The previous curriculum also used a textbook that was replaced by open-access content such as articles, videos, and instructor-created materials.

The change in the course curriculum happened concurrently with the removal of all pre/co-requisite requirements for students taking the course and the fazing in of a campus-wide requirement for all first-time college, degree-seeking students to take the course. The requirement for all first-time college students to take EDUC 1200 would increase the number of students enrolling in the course each semester. Without pre/co-requisite requirements, students at all academic levels could take EDUC 1200. These changes would require faculty to meet the needs of a larger variety of students; therefore, the curriculum needed to be more inclusive.

As a result, a more student-centered version of Learning Frameworks was developed. This new curriculum had a deeper emphasis on cultural wealth and was based on a Self-Regulated Learning model that emphasizes the application of tools on authentic academic tasks and evaluating which strategies work best for each student. The course was adjusted over several semesters based on input from EDUC 1200 faculty and student voices to continue to work toward a complete, inclusive, and effective course for the large variety of students at Lee College.

This paper will review the results of an 18-month, action-oriented research project conducted to better understand the impact of the EDUC 1200 curriculum evolution. First will be a review of the relevant literature and then a description of the methods used in the study and the findings. The paper will conclude with recommendations for colleges looking to implement a Learning Frameworks course that serves all students well.

Literature Review and Critical Components of the New Learning Frameworks Curriculum

Research has suggested that the goals of courses like Learning Frameworks can be met through self-regulated learning (Bembenutty et al., 2013). Teaching these practices within a Cultural Wealth Framework allows for the acknowledgment of students' lived experiences in the classroom. A variety of literature is available about the individual topics of Learning Frameworks (LF), Cultural Wealth Framework (CWF), and Self-Regulated Learning (SRL). However, the author's search did not find any research related to student outcomes in LF courses that utilized SRL and CWF.

Learning Frameworks (LF). According to Hodges et al. (2019-a), the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) began providing formula funding for LF courses in October 1999. These courses, also known as Freshman Seminars or Student Success courses, are designed to help students learn more about how they learn, identify, and practice good academic strategies, as well as become acclimated to the college experience. The current course description for LF from the THECB Academic Course Guide Manual is as follows:

A study of the research and theory in the psychology of learning, cognition, and motivation; factors that impact learning; and application of learning strategies. Theoretical models of strategic learning, cognition, and motivation serve as the conceptual basis for the introduction of college-level student academic strategies. Students use assessment instruments (e.g., learning inventories) to help them identify their own strengths and weaknesses as strategic learners. Students are ultimately expected to integrate and apply the learning skills discussed across their own academic programs and become effective and efficient learners. Students developing these skills should be able to continually draw from the theoretical models they have learned.

In a 2015 study published by Hodges et al. (2019-b), the group researched a LF course and found, "The course directs students to focus on overt behaviors, such as self-monitoring, self-reinforcement, setting goals, and time planning, while also promoting the affective and noncognitive domains of self-regulatory learning." These tasks and others can prepare students for the work they will do throughout their college journeys. While Hodges et al. (2019-a) share that "learning frameworks courses have been found to help support students' development as strategic learners and enabled them to reach higher levels of success in college (p.10)," they have also found that each institution decides individually what topics to cover, approaches to teach with, and assessments to determine success. This variety across LF courses makes researching what works more difficult.

Success and retention are two critical indicators at all community colleges. Erickson and Stone (2012) found a correlation between students who completed LF expressing intent to return to college the following semester. Additionally, Reynolds et al. (2019) share student perceptions that a strong LF course should include academic focus as well as intentional community building. Courses that focus on only academic preparedness leave students lacking peer-to-peer connections, while courses that focus too much on community building leave students feeling less prepared for future courses (Reynolds et al., 2019).

Cultural Wealth Framework (CWF). One critical component of the new curriculum is a CWF. Early on within the course, students are taught that everyone has a variety of cultural wealth based on Yosso's Community of Cultural Wealth Framework (Yosso, 2005). While Yosso's framework was designed to describe the strengths and experiences that people of color bring to any challenges they face, all students bring assets to the table that can help them succeed in college and beyond. According to Yosso, there are six forms of cultural wealth, which include aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistance capital. The first capital is aspirational, which refers to an individual's ability to overcome barriers by focusing on their goals and dreams. Linguistic capital is the ability of an individual to use a variety of language (formal and informal) and communication styles in various situations. Individuals can lean on those they consider family, whether blood or not, to overcome obstacles and get support—which is familial capital. Moving to more external supports, social capital refers to peers, social networks, and community resources an individual can reach out to for support. Navigational capital refers to the strengths individuals gain while navigating through various systems and institutions. Lastly, resistance capital is the skills and knowledge an individual gains while challenging inequities (Yosso, 2005).

Moeller and Bielfeldt (2011) share that utilizing a CWF enables faculty to identify the strengths of diverse cultures and create more culturally-relevant assignments and lessons. Identifying and valuing cultural capital allows faculty to gain insight into their students. Using a CWF includes incorporating culturally-responsive teaching practices, using relevant and diverse teaching materials, and engaging students in investigation (Bean-Folks & Ellison, 2018).

Self-Regulated Learning (SRL). Another critical component of the new curriculum is SRL. There are three phases of SRL: planning, practice, and reflection (Bembenutty et al., 2013). During the planning phase, learners should set goals, analyze assignments, predict their grades, and develop a plan. The practice phase includes studying, doing assignments, experimenting with learning strategies, and using resources. After completing assignments and receiving feedback, learners should complete the reflection phase. This final phase should include reflection on the amount of effort put into the work of the module, if grade predictions were accurate, why there were any discrepancies, and what adjustments should be made to increase success in the next module. These three phases can be completed over and over throughout the course.

Khan et al. (2020) shared findings from their study, which showed students who had higher levels of SRL performed better academically. They also shared that SRL behaviors indicate higher achievement. Kimmel et al. (2020) and Zheng et al. (2019) also found similar results in their studies of SRL with business students and medical students, respectively. Kimmel et al. (2020) found that after practicing SRL, business students had better grade satisfaction. Zheng et al. (2019) shared that SRL helped medical students in flipped classrooms to learn strategies and then apply them in various situations. A major goal of SRL is to shift students' thinking to take ownership of their own education and grades based on the amount of effort they put in.

Methodology

Given the vital role LF courses play in student success, Lee College formed a committee to review the curriculum and collect ideas for an experimental curriculum. Based on members' knowledge of the CWF and the value of SRL, those concepts were intertwined throughout the curriculum to see the impact. I examined several research questions related to the evolved LF course in this study.

Research Questions

- RQ 1: How does a community college revise a critical first-year experience course to be student-centered and high-impact course?
- RQ 2: Does using a Cultural Wealth Framework within the Learning Frameworks course impact students' success, self-efficacy, and sense of belonging?
- RQ 3: Would students show higher success with the newly designed curriculum?
- RQ 4: Would use of Self-Regulated Learning impact students' perceptions of their abilities?

Given this research is exploratory and involves gathering information to better understand students' perspectives and experiences with a first-year college experience course, the LF course (EDUC 1200), the most effective methodology at this stage of the work was descriptive research.

Research Site

Lee College is a mid-sized community college about 30 miles east of Houston, Texas, servicing approximately 8,000 students, including dual credit students from 20 nearby high schools (Lee College, 2022). The college was founded in 1934 and offers 100 degree and certificate programs. Lee College includes the main campus in Baytown, Texas, satellite campuses in Liberty, Texas, inside the Huntsville State Prison, and the McNair Center (also in Baytown). The U.S. Department of Education designates the college as a Hispanic-serving institution with a student population of 47 percent Hispanic, 32 percent White, 14 percent Black, and seven percent of other races or ethnicities. The student population is split evenly by gender, and the largest age groups of the population are 18 to 25 years and under 18 years. Lee College began offering a LF course in 2014 and has made many modifications to the course over the years.

Participants

In Fall 2021, there were a total of 903 students enrolled in EDUC 1200, with the largest age group being dual credit students under 18 years. The majority of the students were females, and the largest ethnic group was Hispanic (Tables 1, 2, and 3).

Table 1. Headcount in EDUC 1200 by Age Group in Fall 2021

Age Group	Unduplicated Headcount
Under 18	564
18-19	240
20-21	42
22-24	16
25-29	14
30-34	11
35-39	8
40-49	8
Total	903

Table 2. Headcount in EDUC 1200 by Gender in Fall 2021

Gender	Unduplicated Headcount
Female	555
Male	348
Total	903

Table 3. Headcount in EDUC 1200 by Race/Ethnicity in Fall 2021

Race/Ethnicity	Unduplicated Headcount
African American	95
American Indian/Alaska Native	6
Asian	22
Hispanic	480
Multi-Racial	21
Not Specified	22
White	257
Total	903

Tables 4, 5, and 6 describe the demographics of the EDUC 1200 students at Lee College for Spring 2022. Of the 622 enrolled EDUC 1200 students, the majority (477) were under the age of 18 years.

Table 4. Headcount in EDUC 1200 by Age Group in Spring 2022

Age Group	Unduplicated Headcount
Under 18	477
18-19	81
20-21	27
22-24	18
25-29	6
30-34	5
35-39	3
40-49	3
Total	620

Table 5. Headcount in EDUC 1200 by Gender in Spring 2022

Gender	Unduplicated Headcount
Female	374
Male	246
Total	620

Table 6. Headcount in EDUC 1200 by Race/Ethnicity in Spring 2022

Race/Ethnicity	Unduplicated Headcount
African American	67
American Indian/Alaska Native	2
Asian	26
Hispanic	352
Multi-Racial	21
Not Specified	12
White	140
Total	620

Timeline of Project Work

Fall 2020: Motivation to Improve the Learning Frameworks Course

In 2020, under a new administration, Lee College's efforts to improve the first-year experience were renewed and refocused. Many new initiatives began to help increase students' sense of belonging, self-efficacy, and overall experience at the college. The college had received a Title V grant to begin reworking the programming for the First Year Experience (FYE) as a whole. This included redeveloping the New Student Orientation (NSO). The LF course (EDUC 1200) is an essential part of the FYE, so a committee was created to identify areas of improvement within the course. Some complaints with the traditional curriculum included that it was tailored to traditional college students, focused too heavily on career exploration for students in technical fields, and included a large amount of what was considered busy work. While several components of the traditional curriculum were maintained, such as personality profiles, career exploration, and financial literacy, the changes to the EDUC 1200 curriculum incorporated more critical thinking, small and large group discussion, and the concepts of a CWF and SRL.

Spring 2021: Experimentation of Potential Changes by Cross Section of College Community

The re-creation of this course began in Spring 2021 when a group of faculty and administrators worked through a course designed by the provost. As the team and I went through his course, I collected their feedback and began working on merging the ideas that he brought (including SRL, neuroplasticity, and additional assignments requiring critical thinking) with other pieces of the current curriculum (including the job search and growth mindset) while also trying to incorporate more of a CWF. Over the course of that semester, writing prompts, assignments, and activities merged the multitude of ideas and created a more inclusive, impactful, and sustainable course for all students.

Summer 2021: Initial Improvements to the Learning Frameworks Course (EDUC 1200)

The first pilot of sections with the preliminary version of the new curriculum was piloted in Summer 2021. Six sections of EDC 1200 were offered; three sections were taught with the new curriculum, and the other three used the original curriculum. At that time, no formal survey had been created. However, student voices were collected by individual instructors to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the new curriculum. These sections were very quick, eight-week offerings and made it clear that more work was needed to continue to enhance the curriculum. Based on faculty feedback, it was determined there were, at that point, too many written assignments and not enough activities in certain areas to truly meet the needs of the students or the goals of the course. Throughout the course, the concept of success is addressed by encouraging students to determine how they will identify if they are successful. For some students, success means getting an A on each assignment. For others, it might be completing all their work on time, and for others, just passing the course may be a success for them. Identifying their definition of success is important, so each student has a goal to work toward and reflect on later.

In each of the five modules of the course, students are asked to complete a SRL record. The SRL record asks students to list the graded assignments for the module along with each assignment

due date, their confidence in each assignment, and a learning strategy that might help with the assignment. Working with students during this planning stage ensures they are aware of all graded assignments for the module, as well as the proper due date for each. Students can plan which learning strategies might work best based on the variety they learn throughout the course and determine which assignments they need to put extra effort into, or if they need additional support to succeed.

Fall 2021: Student Feedback on the New Learning Frameworks Course

In Fall 2021, after major changes had been made to the new curriculum, a second pilot of the newest curriculum took place. In addition to the curriculum changes, two new, full-time faculty members joined the LF Division, both of whom had extensive experience working in student services with first-year students and with first-generation college students. They also strongly understood Yosso's (2005) CWF. A total of 45 sections of EDUC 1200 were taught in Fall 2021. There were 16 sections taught with the new curriculum and 29 sections taught with the traditional curriculum. All dual credit courses used the traditional curriculum. Students are introduced to both SRL and the CWF early in the course. For CWF, they are asked to identify and share their own capital in each of these categories to help them understand that regardless of their background, socioeconomic status, gender, race, or any other determining factors, they have many strengths to help them overcome the challenges of college and life. The concepts of cultural wealth are revisited throughout the various topics and assignments within the course to reinforce the importance of identifying and growing personal strengths and assets. The curriculum focuses on helping students apply the concept of cultural wealth to real-life situations, including financial wellness, dealing with spirit crushers, selecting a career path, and accepting feedback on their academic performance. The first few attempts at working through SRL are made as a whole group when students are asked to plan their work for the unit, identify due dates, evaluate their level of confidence with each assignment, and identify a learning strategy they might use for each assignment. As can be seen in Appendix A, students are asked to identify the amount of time spent outside of class working on assignments in the practice stage. In the reflection stage, and after receiving grades on all module assignments, students are asked to reflect on their performance. Again, they list each assignment and describe their success and/or challenges for each. They are also asked to share any learning strategies they may have tried during the module, explain if those strategies helped, and describe why or why not. Lastly, students are asked to answer four, long-answer questions:

- What from this module had the most impact on you and why?
- How can you apply these concepts in other classes?
- What did you learn about yourself as a learner?
- What will you do differently in the next module?

The reflection phase is critical for students to focus on what worked and did not work for them throughout the module. They are encouraged to honestly reflect on the amount of effort they put in and how it directly relates to the grades they earned on their assignments. Additionally, looking back at what learning strategies worked/did not work allows them to plan better for the next module. The additional questions ask students to think intentionally about how what they learned can be applied in other real-life situations.

Data Collection

Student survey data were collected in the sections of LF that had implemented the new curriculum in both the Fall 2021 and Spring 2022 semesters. The full dual credit sections were not included because those sections still used the traditional curriculum. Students were given a retro pre/post survey administered in Blackboard at the end of the semester (Appendix B).

Data Analysis

Student feedback was collected on the new curriculum. A pre/post survey, EDUC 1200 Student Survey, was administered to students at the end of the course. The survey was designed to capture feedback from students on their perspectives on the critical components of the course that were changed based on feedback from the pilot in Summer 2021.

Survey items asked students to answer questions about how often they experienced certain behaviors associated with learning. Survey item response possibilities were: “always,” “often,” “never,” and “rarely.” The answers of “never” and “rarely” were coded to be negative responses, while the answers of “often” and “always” were coded to be positive responses. The collected survey data were analyzed as pre-data and post-data, and then differences in responses were calculated into percentages. The rate of change from negative to positive was used to identify areas of improved student perspectives.

Survey findings provided evidence to support changes to the LF curriculum. There were increases in students’ understanding across almost all critical elements of the course. Table 7 shows findings from the student survey aligned to changes in the course. Several key components of the curriculum seemed to stand out based on the voices that were collected by the students. There were increases in students’ understanding across five critical elements of the LF course.

Table 7. Increases in Students’ Understanding Across Critical Elements of the Learning Frameworks Course

Student Survey Finding	Critical Curriculum Component
There was an increase in understanding of the variety of Student Support Services.	Introduction to Student Support Services in Module 1; reminders throughout the course
There was an increase in their sense of belonging at Lee College. This included an 11% increase in feeling accepted by faculty and a 9% increase in feeling accepted by peers.	Large and small group discussions throughout the course; group projects; asset-based teaching practices
There was a 12% increase in confidence in their personal financial literacy.	Re-developed Financial Literacy Module; Societal Financial Issues Project
There was a 9.75% increase in confidence in their ability to succeed in college.	Growth Mindset Module
There was an 11% increase in better understanding of what major to study.	Lessons about degrees; Job Search Module
There was a 19.5% increase in understanding of which study strategies work best for them.	Self-Regulated Learning practices throughout the course

Students indicated positive views on the topics of cultural wealth, financial literacy, and growth mindset. Students also indicated they better understood the various student support services offered. They also indicated they had a greater sense of belonging and felt more likely to be successful in college after taking the course. The following are direct quotes from students sorted into themes around the course.

Understanding of Student Support Services

- “This class is very helpful. In this class we can realize what we really need to stay motivated and find resources that help us to keep going on our college path—and in life really. Definitely make sure that all students are aware of these resources because they may not know about them and not be able to use them. These resources were a big help to me personally.”
- “It’s a great course and crucial for all college freshmen! It taught me a lot about myself and the school in general.”

Sense of Belonging

- “I like that this class is very inclusive of everybody and is made to be a safe space for people of all walks of life and all personalities, which isn’t always something you experience in public places. It was a nice change of pace, and I hope that current and future students feel the same way.”
- “This class helped me to not be lost in the crazy environment of what college is, and I am glad I took it.”

Ability to Succeed

- “Overall, I think EDUC 1200 is a great course, and I had a really good teacher. Being that this was my first semester back at college in about three years, it was a confidence boost. And it helped me feel like I could actually accomplish my goal of graduating from college. I would definitely recommend anyone to take this class because I think everyone could gain something from it.”
- “In this class, we have the opportunity to make an introspection in ourselves that could help us to succeed.”
- “Before I started this class, I had no idea what it was about or anything about it. But this class gave me so much information and so many new skills I’ve learned and will use in the future.”

Students also shared less positive perspectives of the course. Students indicated activities and assignments they did not see as having as high value as others. Table 8 shows feedback from the students and the subsequent changes that were made to the course for the Spring 2022 version of the course.

Table 8. Feedback from Students' Perspectives that Led to Changes to EDUC 1200 in Spring 2022

Student Survey Finding	Curriculum Change
"Most students taking the EDUC 1200 class are new to using Blackboard, so maybe spend more time to teach everyone how to maneuver throughout Blackboard."	Additional focus on using Blackboard
"I wish that there would be more enforcement on group work because I think that it would be good in helping students make more friends and learn how to work together."	Additional opportunities for group work and added focus on how to work successfully in groups
"The only other thing that felt tedious in this class was the SRL Record. It felt like a waste of time only because I would have other assignments and felt like it would get in the way."	Some modifications to the SRL records were made to make them easier to complete

Spring 2022: Students Perspectives of the Latest Version of the Learning Frameworks Course

Enrollment in EDUC 1200 was lower in Spring 2022. Survey data were still collected and showed positive impacts on students.

Student Survey Finding	Critical Curriculum Component
There was a greater understanding of their cultural wealth, indicating a 55% increase in understanding the knowledge, strengths, and skills from outside the classroom.	Cultural Wealth Module and intentional revisiting of cultural wealth throughout the course
There was an increase in their sense of belonging at Lee College, including a 20% increase in feeling accepted by peers.	Large and small group discussions throughout the course; group projects
There was a 25% increase in understanding of what major they wanted to study.	Lessons about degrees; Job Search Module
There was a 36% increase in understanding of which study strategies work best for them.	Multiple opportunities to learn about and try different study strategies; Self-Regulated Learning records
There was a 38% increase in confidence with personal financial literacy.	Financial Literacy Module; Financial Societal Issues research projects
There was a 50% greater belief that effort can change intelligence.	Growth Mindset Module

Cultural Wealth

- “The assignment that had the biggest impact on me, I feel, would have been the assignment on cultural wealth. I feel this one had the most impact on me because it helped to show me how much I really depend on my family and, most of all, my mom.”
- “The topic that had the biggest impact on me in EDUC 1200 was cultural wealth. The reason why is that I never understood why cultural wealth was so involved in our everyday lives. When I got more in-depth with it in this class, it gave me an official understanding. I learned the details of cultural wealth and the importance it has on your job, yourself, and your peers.”

Financial Literacy

- “The topic that had the biggest impact on me in EDUC 1200 was Mode 4 Financial Literacy because this mode helped to know a little more about money, debit, and credit cards.”
- “Financial Literacy. Even though I enjoyed every topic in this class, financial literacy stuck out the most because I have started using what I learned in this module and applied it to my everyday life.”

Major and Career

- “The assignment that had the biggest impact on me was the one where we had to research our major and interview someone that did that. This had the biggest impact on me because it made me change my major due to the fact that my old major had a low demand for the future.”
- “The job search was the most influential part of the course. This section allowed me to use the aptitude test and other articles to learn what I wanted to do and how I am going to get there.”

These data continue to share that students find value in the LF course and that the curriculum, activities, and resources from the course are impacting them in a positive way.

Looking Forward

All Summer 2022 sections of LF at Lee College were offered the newest LF curriculum. Adaptations had to be made to condense the traditional 16-week curriculum into 10 weeks for the summer session. However, all the critical components of the curriculum remained intact. Over the summer, several sessions of mandatory professional development for dual credit adjuncts were held to ensure they had time to review the new curriculum and ask questions before starting the Fall semester. In Fall 2022, all EDUC 1200 courses were taught with the new curriculum, including those taught by the dual credit adjunct partners. Student perspectives continued to be collected with the survey. The LF faculty look forward to analyzing the survey results to see if there are any differences between the opinion of our main campus students and those being taught at their respective high schools.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are sorted into internal and external recommendations, and recommendations for further research. Recommendations for further professional development, continuous improvement, and potential uses for certain curriculum components are made for continued internal work. Recommendations for the field are related to course descriptions, student learning outcomes, faculty selection, and professional development.

Internal Recommendations for Lee College

Professional Development. According to Hodges et al. (2019), when surveying community colleges in Texas, “Most respondents, 33 (75%), indicated that training was available for the instructors. The remaining 11 (25%) noted that there was either no training available or they were unclear if the training was available. The requirement for training, when available, was different depending on the type of instructor.” To avoid hit-or-miss professional learning opportunities, one major recommendation is to provide ongoing professional development related to student development for full-time, part-time, and dual credit faculty. As a result of this action-oriented research project, my team and I at Lee College have been very intentional with the topics, activities, and assessments used in the LF course as we continue to find ways to meet the needs of the students. Lee College should support ongoing professional development such as a common read of *Relationship Rich Education: How Human Connections Drive Success in College* by Peter Felten and Leo M. Lambert. Full-time faculty who participate in professional development of this type will create and host professional development for adjunct faculty to expand the reach of the learning. Additionally, the University of South Carolina hosts the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition annual conference each spring. Lee College and other colleges interested in improving LF should invest in sending teams to professional learning to both share internal work and learn from national partners.

Potential Uses. Another recommendation is to investigate the potential use of SRL and CWF in other courses and disciplines at Lee College. The findings of this research project suggest students find value in learning about their learning through SRL practices. Faculty in other disciplines could incorporate SRL into their courses to further students' understanding of how they learn in different content areas. Faculty in all fields would benefit from allowing students to identify areas for additional exposure to reflect on what learning strategies work for them, more ways to take charge of their learning, and more practice reflecting on their academic performance. In this study, students expressed finding value in the CWF that is incorporated throughout the course curriculum. Much of education across content areas, including higher education, is approached with a deficit focus that causes many students to feel inadequate in the classroom. Helping them to shift their thinking by getting them to identify some of the many assets they bring with them to the college classroom can help them be more confident and more successful in any field. Exploring other courses where students can be reminded of their cultural wealth could be beneficial to the students we serve.

Continuous Improvement. My research also suggests the need to continuously improve the LF curriculum at Lee College. Future instructors should continue to collect survey results from students for the foreseeable future, and faculty teams should analyze the results to identify weaknesses in the curriculum and ways to help students even more.

External Recommendations for the Field

Clearer Course Description. The current course description for LF from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) Academic Course Guide Manual (ACGM) is as follows:

A study of the research and theory in the psychology of learning, cognition, and motivation; factors that impact learning; and application of learning strategies. Theoretical models of strategic learning, cognition, and motivation serve as the conceptual basis for the introduction of college-level student academic strategies. Students use assessment instruments (e.g., learning inventories) to help them identify their own strengths and weaknesses as strategic learners. Students are ultimately expected to integrate and apply the learning skills discussed across their own academic programs and become effective and efficient learners. Students developing these skills should be able to continually draw from the theoretical models they have learned.

This course description is extremely broad and leaves much up for interpretation, especially in the absence of any mandated learning outcomes. My research suggests that a clearer and more defined course description developed by the THECB could provide necessary guidance for colleges looking to implement a more meaningful course. As a result of this project, I found that what is offered and required in LF varies widely. A more direct course description would help students at various colleges receive a similar high-quality learning experience.

State-Level Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs). The results of this action-research project suggest a need for the THECB to better define the student learning outcomes associated with LF. LF is one of the only courses in the ACGM that does not have any state-mandated student learning outcomes.

Lee College has defined SLOs for the course. Other colleges may consider adopting and/or revising similar SLOs to better communicate the goals of the course to students. The learning outcomes for LF at Lee College are:

- Students will learn how to identify, access, and utilize Lee College resources.
- Students will be able to describe essential skills and abilities including soft skills, required level of education, and projected employment trends for one or more occupations as potential career goals.
- Students will demonstrate clear written communication skills.
- Students will demonstrate critical-thinking skills.
- Students will demonstrate self-regulated learning.
- Students will apply financial literacy skills to their current and future needs.
- Students will describe characteristics of growth mindset, neuroplasticity, working memory, and stereotype threat.
- Students will apply concepts of cultural wealth.

Important Characteristics for Faculty Teaching Learning Frameworks. While there does not seem to be any formal research on the type of faculty who are best suited to teach LF courses, through this applied research project, I identified some consistent qualities that seem to be most beneficial to students. On some campuses, the only major required qualification is a master's

degree to teach LF. The faculty that participated in this research project had extensive experience working in student services with first-year and first-generation college students and a strong understanding of the CWF in the course. These experiences prepared them well to engage with the curriculum and deliver it to students. This suggests that colleges should create more specific requirements for whom they allow to teach LF to better support students.

Ongoing Professional Development Requirements. Colleges should also create requirements for ongoing professional development for their LF faculty. As the population of community college students continues to grow and change, faculty teaching practices also need to grow and change. Faculty should continue to investigate what works best for their students and adapt their teaching to best meet the needs of their students. Ongoing professional development allows faculty to stay up to date with innovative ideas and research-based, high-impact practices.

Research. There is room for further research on the effectiveness of the LF design on student success. Lee College plans to continue collecting student surveys for the foreseeable future to look for trends or areas for improvement. The college could also use completion and retention rates to identify if more students are being successful in subsequent semesters after completing LF with the new curriculum than in the past. Once all sections on LF are using the new curriculum, data can be collected from dual credit adjunct faculty to get their perceptions of the course curriculum and how it impacted their students.

References

- Bean-Folkes, J., & Ellison, T. L. (2018). Teaching in a culture of love: An open dialogue about African American student learning. *School Community Journal, 28*(2), 213–228.
- Bembenutty, H., Cleary, T., & Kitsantas, A. (2013). *Applications of self-regulated learning across diverse disciplines*. Information Age Publishing.
- Erickson, S. L., & Stone, M. F. (2012). First year experience course: Insight from the first two years. *American Journal of Business Education, 5*(2), 139–148.
- Hodges, R., Acee, T. W., Jarrett, S. M., Leblanc, R., Lin, Y., Castillo, A. M., Cox, C. H. T., Lawson, C., Oelschlegel, C. P., & Flaggs, D. A. (2019-a). Characteristics of learning frameworks courses in Texas public community colleges. *Journal of College Academic Support Programs, 2*(1), 7–23.
- Hodges, R., Payne, E., Morgan, K., Johnston-Ashton, K., & LeBlanc, R. (2019-b). Salient factors for student success gained through a learning frameworks course. *Journal of College Reading and Learning, 49*(2), 129–145. 10.1080/10790195.2019.1583083
- Khan, Y. M., Shah, M. H., & Sahibzada, H. E. (2020). *Impact of self-regulated learning behavior on the academic achievement of university students*.
<https://www.proquest.com/openview/426990171c5680392c8b8e3735f93259/1?cbl=55194&pqorigsite=gscholar&parentSessionId=0t0unrtUUyEBIEmzatqs%2FNJ1SIPe8Y5iPm%2BteWd3oH4%3D>
- Kimmel, S., Trouard, S., & Robbins, R. (2020). I can't get no (grade) satisfaction: Self-regulated learning and success in a school of business. *Business Education Innovation Journal, 12*(1), 54-62.
- Lee College. (2022). *About Lee College: Quick facts*. Retrieved October 18, 2022, from <https://www.lee.edu/about/>
- Moeller, M. R., & Bielfeldt, D. (2011). Shaping perceptions: Integrating community cultural wealth theory into teacher education. *Journal of Applied Learning in Higher Education, 3*, 81–96.
- Nilson, L. B. (2013). *Creating self-regulated learners: Strategies to strengthen students' self-awareness and learning skills*. Stylus Publishing.
- Reynolds, D., Byrne, L., Campbell, J., & Spritz, B. (2019). One size doesn't fit all: Students' perceptions of FYE approaches. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, 19*(3), 105–118.
- Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? *Race, Ethnicity and Education, 8*(1), 69–91.
- Zheng, B., Ward, A., & Stanulis, R. (2020). Self-regulated learning in a competency-based and flipped learning environment: learning strategies across achievement levels and years. *Med Educ Online, 25*(1). 10.1080/10872981.2019.1686949
- Zimmerman, B. J. (1990). Self-regulated learning and academic achievement: An overview. *Educational Psychologist, 25*(1), 3–17.

Acknowledgements

The Texas Success Center is generously funded by [several organizations](#) that support student success in Texas and across the country. We gratefully acknowledge their support for the Texas Pathways Community College Research Fellowship component of our knowledge development strategy.

The Center thanks fellow Channell Cook for her thoughtful approach to the action-oriented research fellow project presented here. We extend our gratitude to Afi Wiggins, Ph.D. who served as a mentor to Ms. Cook during her fellowship.

Suggested Citation

Cook, C. (2022). *Refocusing a Learning Frameworks course to increase student success*. Texas Association of Community Colleges, Texas Success Center.

Correspondence

Kristina Flores, Ph.D.
Senior Director of Research & Evaluation
kflores@tacc.org



Texas Success Center

The Texas Success Center supports the Texas Association of Community Colleges members' efforts to improve student success and directs Talent Strong Texas Pathways—a statewide strategy focused on building capacity for community colleges to design and implement structured academic and career pathways at scale, for all students. For more information, visit tacc.org/tsc