

# **Personal Growth 1999**

## **General Assessment Report**

### **Summary**

#### **Outcome**

The academic and co-curricular experiences of students at the University of La Verne will lead to personal growth and development.

#### **Faculty and Personnel Involved**

Aghop Der-Karabetian, Steve Maak, Ruby Montano-Cordova, and Jonathan Reed

#### **Methods and Procedures**

1. Personal testimonials of seniors
2. Senior exit survey

#### **Results**

1. Testimonials showed that while at ULV students learned to relate to people, make and maintain friendships, take personal responsibility, be independent, gain self-confidence, find direction in life, and tolerate other cultures and peoples.
2. The senior exit survey showed that ULV had high to moderate impact on students in helping them progress in their personal and social life, intellectual growth, feeling pride in accomplishments, life's direction, social and leadership skills, and willingness to change.
3. Less than 50% of seniors said they made progress in making use of their talents and leisure, improving their physical and mental health, expressing their feelings and ideas, coping with change, and managing personal finances.
4. The self-reported impact of ULV on personal growth was differentiate between freshmen entries and transfers, as well as between traditional and non-traditional students.

#### **Actions for Program Improvement**

No formal dialogue has taken place yet around the issues raised by these data. However, possible recommendations include:

- a) Bringing together Counseling Center and Student Life staff to look into ways of addressing issues related to mental health, expression of emotions, and coping with change.
- b) Discussion with faculty in the School of Business and Global Studies concerning the issue of management of personal finances by students.

## Personal Growth

### Outcome

The academic and co-curricular experiences of students at The University of La Verne will lead to personal growth and development.

### Faculty and Personnel Involvement

Jonathan Reed (Philosophy and Religion) and Ruby Montano-Cordova (Student Life) facilitated a session at the senior retreat where students shared the way their experiences at ULV changed them.

Steve Maack (Institutional Research), Aghop Der-Karabetian (Psychology), faculty in the Assessment Committee, and students helped in the development, administration and/or analysis of the senior exit survey.

### Methods and Procedures

Two sources of data were used to assess the impact of student experiences on personal growth:

1. Personal testimonials of seniors
2. Senior exit survey

Personal Testimonials: In the Spring of every academic year the Student Life Office takes seniors to a retreat to reflect about their experiences and give feedback for improvements. Also, as part of the retreat they open the Goal Letters they wrote to themselves as freshmen, and are given a chance to share their thoughts. The 1996 retreat, where 28 students were present, was used for assessment. Shared reflections and experiences were anonymously and discretely recorded verbatim and summarized. To facilitate the process, two questions were asked: How did I grow as a Person? And, how did we grow as a community? Individual statements of students are attached to this section.

Senior Exit Survey: During the 1997-1998 academic year the ACT College Outcomes Survey was used as a senior exit survey. Additionally, this survey was administered during the 1998-1999 academic year. However, the data will not be available in time for inclusion in this report. The ACT survey has 18 questions that deal with personal growth issues. Comparisons will be made between freshmen and transfers, as well as between adults and traditional age students. National norms will be used for comparison. Responses of different subgroups of senior to the 18 personal growth questions are attached to this section.

## Results

The results from the senior retreat and the ACT College outcome survey are summarized here.

### Senior Retreat

Inspecting the individual comments and reflections of students during the retreat showed some common themes. While studying at ULV students said they learned about themselves, and changed in some significant ways. The following were the predominant themes:

1. Learned to relate to people, and make and maintain friendships.
2. Learned personal responsibility and how to be independent.
3. Gain self-confidence
4. Found direction in life and career.
5. Learned tolerance of other cultures and peoples.

Significant community building events during their student years that helped shaped their thinking included the Rodney King riots, sports championships, students and peers being hurt and killed in drunk driving accidents, and the unexpected death of a beloved and capable administrator.

It seems that coming to college was an important developmental experience. The following two quotes capture some of the essence:

“I learned that change is difficult. Being able to come out of my comfort zone and be vulnerable was important.”

“When I opened my freshmen letter I said to myself, ‘ I must have more complex thoughts than this.’ There was no critical thinking at all. I thought I would flunk out of college, but I stayed on.”

## Senior Exit Survey

For the traditional age students there seemed to be high, moderate and low impact areas related to personal growth. In the **high impact area**, over 70% of students felt that coming to ULV helped them make progress in their personal and social life, experience intellectual growth, become motivated to make something of their life, and feel pride in their accomplishments. In the **moderate impact** area, 50% – 69% of students felt that college helped them reshape their life goals, better understand their talents and interests, improve their self-confidence as well as social and leadership skills, and increase their willingness to change. In the **low impact** area, less than 50% of seniors said that they made progress in making good use of their talents and leisure time, improving their physical and mental health, expressing their feelings and ideas, coping with change, and managing personal finances.

Compared to transfer students, more freshmen felt that ULV helped them make progress in leadership skills, intellectual growth in terms of knowledge and analytical thinking, personal growth, and reshaping of life goals. However, more transfers felt that at ULV they made progress in improving their physical and mental help, and felt pride in accomplishments at ULV. It seems that in personal growth freshmen are impacted differently than transfer students.

Comparison of traditional age and returning adult students showed some developmentally appropriate impact on personal growth. More of the traditional students felt that ULV helped them reshape life goals, use their talents and leisure time, improve on physical and mental health, and develop social skills. Compared to off-campus adults, more main campus adults (CAPA) felt that ULV helped them be motivated to make something of their life, helped them gain self-confidence, and helped them grow intellectually. Compared to national privates, more ULV traditional age students felt that college helped them make progress in the following: shaping their life goals, feeling pride in their accomplishments, relating to others socially with confidence, understanding their own talents and interests, willingness to change and learn new things, and in just overall personal growth.

## Dissemination and Dialogue

These results have been presented to the Office of Student Life and the School of Continuing Education for sharing and discussion. They have not been discussed by the main-campus faculty. It will be disseminated to the faculty and senior management through an e-mail distribution list as soon as Fall 1999 classes begin. This document may help facilitate the dialogue since it summarizes the thrust of the findings.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

These data seem to suggest that ULV is impacting the personal growth of its students in developmentally significant ways, and that the impact appears to differ for those who enter as freshmen and transfers. Also, the self-reported impact of the College appears to appropriately differentiate the adult and traditional age students. Personal growth areas that need attention involve issues related to emotional rather than intellectual or social growth. Relatively few seniors report progress in their ability to deal with expression of feeling, and coping with change. Another area that very few seniors, adult and traditional age student, report significant contribution by ULV is in managing finances.

Several action recommendations for improvement are implied in these results:

1. Bring together Counseling Center and Student Life staff to look into issues of physical and mental health, emotional growth, and coping with change.
2. Discuss the issue of developing skills in financial management with the faculty in the School of Business and Global Studies, as well as the General Education Committee.

## Actions for Program Improvement

Since no formal dialogue has taken place related to the results of the assessment of personal growth, no action has been taken for program improvement on the academic side. However, assessment efforts on the part of Student Affairs have been an ongoing part of their program development and improvement. References to such efforts may be found in their self-study document.