

When I was in college I learned a great many things. Of course I learned from my instructors and my classes. The seemingly endless hours of reading, lectures, note taking, studying, and writing often pays off in something sticking in your head for years and years. I constantly quote things I heard in classes in this article, especially from my doctoral classes.

But that's not all you learn in college. There is a great deal one learns outside the classroom while in college. If you are a traditionally-aged student, say 18, when you begin college think about how much you learned between 18 and 22, and not all of it because of a test or project.

I had my first long-term relationship in college. That taught me a lot, mostly what it feels like to be dumped. Not good, if you were wondering.

I also learned how to do my own laundry, get my own meals, and budget for my expenses. Many of those things I took for granted at home.

But I also learned through college activities and jobs. I was a member of the broadcasting club (I was a broadcasting major) which provided some great learning opportunities. The club would bring in guest speakers from the industry and I still remember some of those sessions to this day.

I was very active in my residence hall government and was elected the Entertainment Chair where I made sure there were fun activities nearly every weekend. I even put on a building talent show that was wildly received and an end of the year luau.

I worked as a desk clerk at the residence hall too, and that taught me an incredible amount ranging from getting along with coworkers to how to talk a drunk student into going to bed and sobering up. I handled emergencies on occasion and helped the building run smoothly by processing maintenance requests, getting people their mail, and, most importantly, picking out the movies that would play in the lounge. Monty Python was big at my building.

If you were to ask me where I learned the most in class or out of class, or what learning had the biggest impact on my life, I would be hard-pressed to pick. Both were instrumental in helping me be the person I have grown to be. I do know which learning was the most fun. I mean, come on, I put on a luau and performed as the Church Lady in the building talent show, to rave reviews I might add.

This out-of-classroom learning, or cocurricular learning as it is called now, has always been with us, but in recent years there has been a new emphasis placed on it. Our accreditor, the Higher Learning Commission, is requiring all its accredited institutions to document and improve not only the learning that is occurring in the classroom, but now in cocurricular learning as well.

To that end, we have been working with all of our clubs and organizations to have learning outcomes in place and measuring those outcomes to see if learning has occurred. The purpose is to use that data to see if learning can be improved. We have 45+ clubs, teams and organizations at NCCC that students can join to take part in cocurricular learning. NCCC has Art Club, Board Game Knights, Cultural Exchange Club, Honors Program, Improv Comedy Club, Scholar's Bowl, and Panther History Club, just to name a few.

We are also working on adding student jobs to our list of cocurricular learning opportunities. We will be able to measure how much a student has learned in the course of having a campus job, much like what I

experienced as a desk clerk. Then we will be able to report on that learning and look for ways to make it better in the future to enrich what it means to be a student worker at NCCC.

We have recently launched a new online resource devoted to these clubs and organizations called myPantherCLAW. Here students can learn what clubs are available, find out about upcoming events, and even join the clubs at the click of a button. The website service helps monitor club and student cocurricular activity allowing students to sign in that they have gone to a club meeting or event and allows us to measure learning through surveys and other methods.

College is a transformational time in someone's life. For the first time colleges fully recognize that we must make out-of-class learning something we measure. One of the mottos I live by is, "You only care about the things you measure." NCCC cares a great deal about cocurricular learning. We want to measure it and improve it.

No doubt I owe much of who I am today to both classroom learning and out-of-class experiences. I learned by studying in class and I learned a lot by ordering grass skirts for the luau, plus making sure we had plenty of designated drivers available to get students home safely. It was all part of going to college, making it one of the best times of my life. That's our goal at NCCC as well.

Now quit picturing me in a grass skirt. And no, I did not wear a coconut bra.

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