



Undergraduate Common Curriculum

2014 Assessment report



UNIVERSITY of
DENVER

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Executive Summary

This study, authored by the Central Committee on General Education, serves as a progress report to the Higher Learning Commission and a status update for the University community. It describes the University's detailed process for assessing the Common Curriculum, presents findings, interprets outcomes, and charts future efforts.

After two years of broad faculty-driven effort, the University of Denver approved and began implementing a new general education program in 2010. Called the Common Curriculum, the program features eight curricular areas, each with specific student learning outcomes and required course characteristics. The Common Curriculum and its outcomes derive from the Undergraduate Student Outcomes, which follow the University Vision, Values, Mission, and Goals. Assessment efforts began immediately in several areas of the new program, but they were first fully conducted in 2012, with annual efforts since then.

Faculty and administrative staff groups in each of the eight areas of the Common Curriculum conduct direct assessments of student learning in their respective areas. They gather and analyze data and write reports that go to the Central Committee, which has general oversight of general education curriculum. (We have provided reports as a series of appendices.) The Central Committee reviews, evaluates, and synthesizes these findings, and it gives first-stage approval of changes.

The findings reported in this document demonstrate, with direct evidence based on student artifacts and performances, that the Common Curriculum is achieving its learning outcomes. Moreover, those findings are being used both by individual faculty members to improve their own courses, and by committees in the eight curricular areas to modify area outcomes, to identify needs and opportunities, and to refine the assessment process itself.

This report also presents findings from indirect measures (primarily student course evaluations and the National Survey of Student Engagement). While there are limitations of such measures, deriving from their nature, their findings also indicate that the Common Curriculum is achieving its learning outcomes.

The assessment process has spurred productive conversations about teaching and learning on campus, both within the curriculum's course areas and across those areas. These discussions have raised new questions for exploration in future iterations of the assessment process, and they have identified important opportunities for faculty development.

Introduction

The undergraduate experience at the University of Denver encompasses a wide range of learning opportunities designed to promote excellence, inclusiveness, and student engagement in a dynamic and innovative environment. To foster these qualities, the University is dedicated to robust academic assessment; gathering evidence of student learning, and using that evidence to improve curricula, pedagogy, processes, and structures.

Purpose

This report documents how the assessment process for the undergraduate general education curriculum, introduced in 2010, was developed and implemented. The report includes the first comprehensive assessment results for the Common Curriculum, reviews changes previously made, and recommends further improvements. In this context, we do not presume that either the assessment process or the Common Curriculum is perfect. In this review, we seek to illuminate opportunities for growth and further develop existing strengths—including those in the assessment process itself.

This document is prepared for multiple audiences. Internally, it provides transparency and feedback to the faculty who teach (and generate assessment evidence) in the Common Curriculum by demonstrating how summative assessment can improve teaching and learning. It also serves as a record and guide for campus administrators, elaborating the assessment process and its findings.

The report is also important to external stakeholders. Most directly, it serves as an accreditation progress report for the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), the University's regional accrediting body. The HLC review team last visited our campus when the Common Curriculum was initially launched and requested this report. In this report we document how the University has implemented a rigorous self-improvement process that will figure prominently in future programmatic reviews.

Scope

We assess the Common Curriculum as part of the larger undergraduate academic experience. Undergraduate student learning, of course, is a product of the student's academic work in the major, the minor and electives, and elements of the co-curriculum. All aspects combine to contribute to the experience that defines a University of Denver undergraduate degree. That said, this document focuses on those elements that are essentially the same for all undergraduates: the Common Curriculum. While some of the evidence we examined reflects more generally on the undergraduate student outcomes, we discuss and analyze it within the context of the Common Curriculum.

This document describes the Common Curriculum history, goals, assessment measures, and processes for using assessment results for curricular improvement. It summarizes extensive data on student learning and presents the conclusions and recommendations from faculty groups and committees whose efforts and findings underlie our work. Substantial appendices contain each area’s individual report.

The Common Curriculum

In 2004, the Undergraduate Student Learning Group, which included faculty representatives from all undergraduate-serving academic units on campus, was charged with developing a set of undergraduate student learning outcomes. These outcomes were constructed to flow directly from the Vision, Values, Mission, and Goals (VVMG) of the University (Table 1).

Table 1. The University of Denver Vision, Values, Mission and Goals

| |
|--|
| <i>Vision</i> |
| The University of Denver will be a great private university dedicated to the public good. |
| <i>Values</i> |
| In all that we do, we strive for excellence, innovation, engagement, integrity and inclusiveness. |
| <i>Mission</i> |
| The mission of the University of Denver is to promote learning by engaging with students in advancing scholarly inquiry, cultivating critical and creative thought, and generating knowledge. Our active partnerships with local and global communities contribute to a sustainable common good. |
| <i>Goals</i> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community—We will create a diverse, ethical, and intellectually vibrant campus community to provide a challenging and liberating learning environment. • Learning—We will provide an outstanding educational experience that empowers students to integrate and apply knowledge from across the disciplines and imagine new possibilities for themselves, their communities, and the world. • Scholarship—We will invigorate research and scholarship across the university to address important scientific, sociopolitical and cultural questions of the new century. |

The group solicited campus-wide input, presenting draft outcomes to the Faculty Senate and to all undergraduate academic units. This three-year process culminated in the University of Denver Undergraduate Student Learning Outcomes that were approved by the Undergraduate Council in May 2007. These outcomes, as shown in Table 2, emphasize learning across and within the disciplines, and highlight intellectual engagement, inquiry, and inclusiveness. Academic departments have mapped student learning outcomes for majors and degree programs onto these University-level student learning outcomes.

Table 2. University of Denver Undergraduate Student Outcomes

| |
|--|
| 1: Epistemology and Inquiry Students recognize the provisional nature of knowledge and understand the distinct and complementary character of diverse modes of inquiry, and apply these modes of inquiry to both disciplinary and interdisciplinary problems. |
| 2: Quantitative Reasoning Students describe quantitative relations and apply appropriate quantitative strategies to examine significant questions and form conclusions. |
| 3: Communication Students develop considered judgments and craft compelling expressions of their thoughts in written, spoken, visual, technologically-mediated, and other forms of interaction. |
| 4: Intellectual Engagement and Reflection Students demonstrate a commitment to self-sustained learning and cultivate habits, including self-discipline, self-reflection, and creativity which make such learning possible. |
| 5: Engagement with Human Diversity Students critically reflect on their own social and cultural identities and make connections and constructively engage with people from groups that are characterized by social and cultural dimensions other than their own. |
| 6: Community Engagement Students consider their relationships with their own and others' physical and social communities as they engage collaboratively with those communities. |
| 7: Disciplinary Knowledge and Practice Students demonstrate breadth and depth of knowledge within at least one discipline including the fundamental principles and ways of knowing or practicing in the discipline(s). |

In 2008, Provost Gregg Kvistad charged a General Education Review Committee to examine the University's existing undergraduate requirements and to revise them as appropriate. Out of numerous campus discussions during that academic year, the committee drafted a proposal. In May of 2009, a final version of the new curriculum was approved by a vote of all faculty members in undergraduate-serving units. The Undergraduate Council and the Board of Trustees then formally adopted the proposal, and the Common Curriculum was implemented in September 2010.

The Common Curriculum is grounded in the strengths of the academic disciplines, while illustrating connections among different ways of approaching inquiry and knowledge. It was designed to have students integrate and apply knowledge across disciplines, in a broad educational experience consistent with the Undergraduate Student Outcomes. That alignment is shown most clearly by the mapping of course categories on outcomes as

seen in Table 3. The dark green areas are components of the Common Curriculum that always address the particular outcome, while the light green areas are components that may do so, as applicable. Students must complete 12-15 courses that reflect eight distinct educational experiences. At the time of implementation, many of the Common Curriculum assessment processes were still in development. However, by fall quarter 2012, the Common Curriculum assessment plan was fully operational.

Table 3. Alignment of the Common Curriculum with the Undergraduate Learning Outcomes

| | | Undergraduate Learning Outcomes | | | | | | |
|-------------------|----------------------|---|------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| | | Epistemology & Inquiry | Quantitative Reasoning | Communication | Intellectual Engagement & Reflection | Engagement w/ Human Diversity | Community Engagement | Disciplinary Knowledge & Practice |
| Common Curriculum | First-Year Seminar | | | | | | | |
| | Writing and Rhetoric | | | | | | | |
| | Language | | | | | | | |
| | WAYS OF KNOWING | Analytical Inquiry & The Natural and Physical World | | | | | | |
| | | Scientific Inquiry & The Natural and Physical World | | | | | | |
| | | Analytical Inquiry & Society and Culture | | | | | | |
| | | Scientific Inquiry & Society and Culture | | | | | | |
| | Advanced Seminar | | | | | | | |

Governance of the Common Curriculum

Oversight of the Common Curriculum, including its structure, content, and cohesion is the responsibility of the Central Committee for General Education. The Central Committee is composed of representatives from the divisions and schools that serve undergraduate students, as well as selected administrators. The current membership includes: a representative from the Divisions of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (associate dean); a representative from the Division of Natural Sciences and Mathematics (associate dean); a representative from the Daniels College of Business (associate dean); a representative from the Josef Korbel School of International Studies (associate dean); the Executive Director of Writing; the faculty chair of the General Education Review Committee (now the Associate Provost for Internationalization); the Director of Academic Assessment; the Registrar; and the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Academic Programs (who serves as Chair). The chair ultimately reviews and approves Common Curriculum courses, following various earlier committee, department, and dean processes.

As the oversight body of the Common Curriculum, the Central Committee serves as the primary assessment body for the Common Curriculum. The Committee meets several times a year, with at least one of those meetings devoted to reviewing assessment reports from the eight component areas of the Common Curriculum, as well as data from indirect sources. The Committee sends formal recommendations for changing the Common Curriculum to the Undergraduate Council, which is ultimately responsible for all undergraduate curricular matters.

Assessment of Student Learning

Best practices in the assessment of student learning suggest that both direct and indirect evidence of learning should be collected and analyzed. This report does not cover the various forms of formative assessments that faculty members use in the classroom in order to gain feedback within the course itself. Rather, this report focuses on summative assessment used to determine the effectiveness of the Common Curriculum as a whole.

Direct evidence of student learning comes from actual student performance. Direct measures of overall student learning at the University of Denver may include specific curricular artifacts (papers, thesis projects, exams, presentations) and student activities outside the specified curriculum (internship performance reviews, publications, independent projects). The use of standardized rubrics figures prominently in assessing direct measures of student learning. Indirect measures of student learning typically assess student perceptions of their learning. Examples of indirect evidence of student learning could include student responses on course evaluations, syllabi review, student participation in faculty research, and student survey responses on perceptions of learning. By themselves, indirect measures may not be sufficient to draw meaningful conclusions about student learning, but they do complement direct measures by providing insight into student experiences.

Because of these distinctions, the assessment process at DU is heavily weighted towards direct measures. As part of the development of the Common Curriculum, faculty groups established specific learning objectives for each of the eight educational areas before linking direct measures of learning to each objective. The overview of the Common Curriculum in Table 4 specifies learning objectives for each educational area.

Table 4. The Common Curriculum

| | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|----------------------------|
| Table 4: The Common Curriculum | | | 1 course (4 credits) |
| First-Year Seminar | Learning Objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Demonstrate what it means to be an active member of an intellectual community by meeting rigorous academic expectations through critical reading, discussion, research, and/or writing.● Practice newly acquired skills in an active learning environment where writing, performing laboratory experiments, quantitative analyses, or other forms of experiential and/or creative activities will shape the goals and activities of the seminar. | | |
| Writing & Rhetoric | Learning Objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Analyze strategies used in a variety of rhetorical situations and employ those principles in their own writings and communications.● Analyze research and writing strategies used in a range of academic traditions and use those strategies in their writings.● Adapt, to specific situations, a strong repertory of writing processes, including generating, shaping, revising, editing, proofreading, and working with other writers. | | 2 courses (8 credits) |
| Language | Learning Objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Based on learning samples at the start and end of the first year of language, students will demonstrate increased proficiency in a language of choice in a specific skill (e.g., writing, speaking, listening or reading).● Demonstrate proficiency in learning about a culture as embodied in a skill (e.g., writing, speaking, listening or reading) in a language of choice. | | 1-3 courses (4-12 credits) |
| AREAS OF INQUIRY | | | |
| The Natural & Physical World | | Society & Culture | |
| Ways of Knowing: Analytical Inquiry | Learning Objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Apply formal reasoning, mathematics or computational science approaches to problem solving within mathematics or computational science, and other disciplines.● Understand and communicate connections between different areas of logic, mathematics or computational science, or their relevance to other disciplines.● Communicate formalisms in logic, mathematics or computing sciences. | Learning Objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Demonstrate the ability to create in written, oral or any other performance medium (e.g., art, music, dance, etc.) or interpret (e.g., critical analysis texts, ideas, or artifacts).● Identify and analyze the connections between texts, ideas, or cultural artifacts and the human experience. | |
| Ways of Knowing: Scientific Inquiry | Learning Objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Articulate concepts and principles specific to a field of study in natural science or technology, and effectively apply scientific methods to ask questions, design and perform experiments, or judge arguments.● Recognize science as a process that considers uncertainty when drawing conclusions from scientific evidence and making predictions from existing data.● Apply and distinguish between qualitative and quantitative forms of analysis and evidence, and demonstrate skills for using and interpreting quantitative information in various formats based on validation and replication of results. | Learning objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Describe basic principles of human functioning and conduct in social and cultural contexts.● Describe and explain how social scientific methods are used to understand these underlying principles. | |
| Advanced Seminar | Learning Objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Demonstrate the ability to integrate and apply content from multiple perspectives to an appropriate intellectual topic or issue.● Write effectively, providing appropriate evidence and reasoning for assertions. | | 1 course (4 credits) |

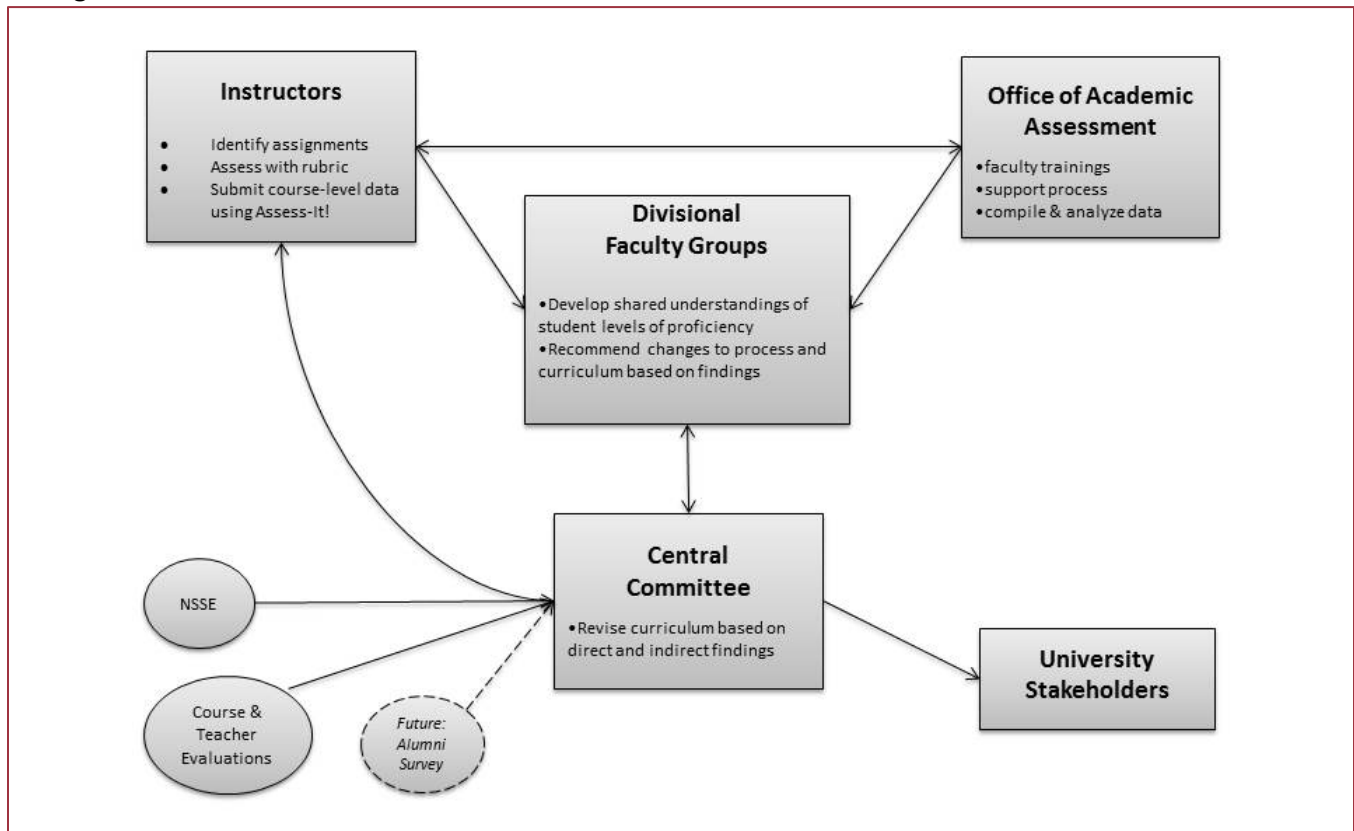
Process

For each of the eight Common Curriculum elements, faculty groups developed specific course-level learning outcomes and then determined the appropriate measurement instruments. Many of the component areas use embedded assessment techniques so that the assessment is built in to the coursework. Other component areas use normed rubrics to assess student portfolios. Faculty teaching in each area are responsible for developing shared definitions of student achievement or student levels of proficiency for each rubric. In most cases, academic departments or programs are responsible for compiling and reviewing data and making course-level improvements; the exceptions are First-year Seminars (FSEM) and Advanced Seminars (ASEM), which are reviewed by interdisciplinary committees. All groups submit annual assessment reports to Director of Academic Assessment and to the Central Committee, which determine whether changes should be made to the curriculum or to the assessment plan, as described above (see Figure 1).

Course and Teacher Evaluations (CTEs) report student perceptions regarding learning. Supplemental questions were added to the student course evaluations for several components of the Common Curriculum: First-year seminar, Writing and Rhetoric, Foreign Language, and Advanced Seminar. In these areas of the Common Curriculum, student responses are near or above 5.0 (where 6.0 is highest), on the questions directly related to Student Learning Outcomes. Responses to these items are shared with faculty groups who assess the Common Curriculum and with the Central Committee. Of course, these are indirect measures, with the limitations that all self-reported perceptions have. Still, the CTE data align well with the direct measures summarized in this report. Additional questions related to learning and the Common Curriculum were added to the standard evaluation questions in targeted Common Curriculum courses.

Additional indirect evidence comes from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), a nationally-normed survey that covers a broad range of student experiences. University of Denver leaders review NSSE results to understand student perceptions about their undergraduate experience. The NSSE contains items that relate generally to the entire student learning experience, and as such it is impossible to disentangle student-learning perceptions in general from those specific to the Common Curriculum. The Office of Alumni Relations and the Office of Institutional Research and Analysis survey alumni at the intervals of one, five, and ten years post graduation. We have placed several questions on that survey that target perceptions of the effectiveness of the Common Curriculum. In 2015, our one-year alumni will be the first group who have graduated under the new curriculum, and whose responses will be used to inform our practice. The shared Common Curriculum assessment process is summarized in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Common Curriculum Assessment Process



First-year Seminar

Oversight of the First-year Seminar (FSEM) assessment process resides with the First-year Seminar Committee, which has two representatives from each of the undergraduate academic areas responsible for teaching FSEM courses: the Divisions of Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences, and the Division of Natural Sciences and Mathematics. The committee includes two ex-officio members: a representative from the University Writing Program and the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Academic Programs.

First-year Seminars are designed thematically by individual instructors from disciplines across campus. Using an embedded assessment approach, instructors identify one or more assignments in their course that address the common learning outcomes associated with all First-year Seminars.

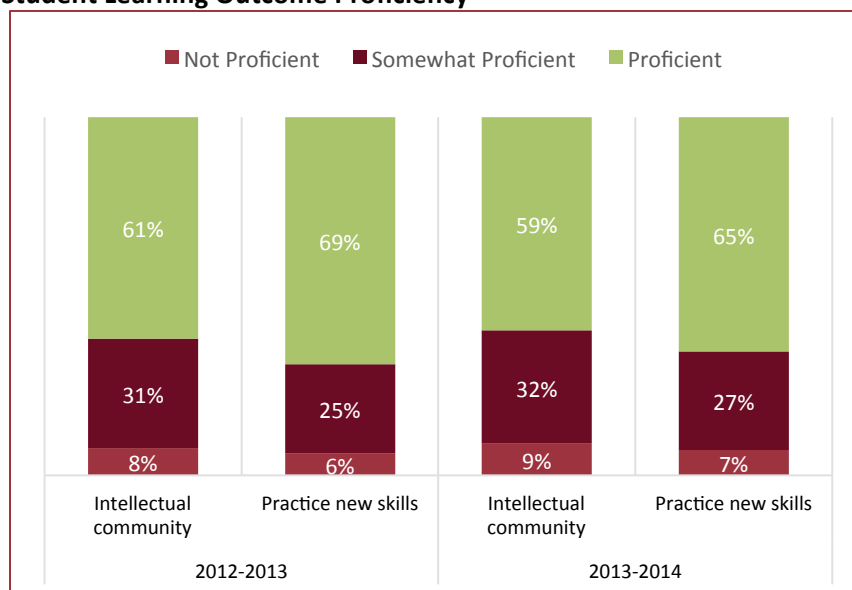
Direct Assessment Results

The following student learning outcomes (SLOs) are associated with the FSEM component of the Common Curriculum:

- **SLO 1:** *Demonstrate what it means to be an active member of an intellectual community by meeting rigorous academic expectations through critical reading, discussion, research, and/or writing.*
- **SLO 2:** *Practice newly acquired skills in an active learning environment where writing, performing laboratory experiments, quantitative analyses, or other forms of experiential and/or creative activities will shape the goals and activities of this seminar.*

The results in Figure 2 show how student performance proficiency levels have shifted with respect to the FSEM Student Learning Outcomes over the past two years. Fall 2012 was the first year that data were collected directly on student performance in FSEM. The full FSEM assessment report is included in Appendix A.

Figure 2. FSEM Student Learning Outcome Proficiency



Overall, the findings indicate that the majority of students have successfully demonstrated proficiency in the outcomes associated with First-year Seminar, and that levels of student proficiency for SLO1, *learning what it means to be a member of an intellectual community*, shifted slightly from 2012 to 2013. This shift can be expected from typical variation in the types of students and faculty who participated across these two years despite continuity in the student academic profile for each entering class and faculty training. The enrollment average for 2013 was 19 students per FSEM as compared to 15 the year before. Faculty members reflected on whether the addition of four students in the class may have changed the experience of the classroom from a close-knit mentoring group to a small academic seminar, which may have influenced the way students

experienced the intellectual community at DU. In Fall 2014, the average class size for FSEM was reduced to 17 students.

A unique feature of the First-year Seminar is that the courses are designed thematically, according to the instructor's area of academic interest. Thus, the 80 plus sections do not have a shared syllabus; courses reflect widely disparate topics and disciplines. We believe this course variation to be a strength of FSEM. However, in terms of assessment, the FSEM committee has not found the current assessment results to be particularly useful in drawing conclusions about the overall quality of this curricular component. Rather, these findings are very useful at the instructor level and provide feedback about specific sections of FSEM. In fact, the most valuable changes made from this assessment process have occurred at the course level, where based on student learning outcome findings many of the faculty have modified their course design and approach. Following is sample of proposed course level changes from eight faculty:

- [I will incorporate] more discussions on writing and how to interpret readings from a critical perspective.
- [I will] require more writing in the class, even though the primary focus is mathematics.
- I will ... include a performance workshop for two or more class sessions, which will expose students to not only writing, but also different styles of presentation, which will set them up to succeed in future classes where presentations are required.
- I would like to employ a great variety of peer review strategies, in order to help students produce a higher quality of work on the final draft...(and)...to strengthen their revision and polishing skills.
- I am also considering changing the assignments to several, shorter writing assignments that are self-contained, rather than a research paper that is submitted in parts
- I plan to implement even more hands-on exercises and assignments next year including field trips, group cooking activities, and creative discussions.
- I will ask the students to do more hands-on work making visual representations of the theories we study.
- [I will] make self-assessment a required, graded part of the course. Required self-assessment may give students in need of regular prompting a vehicle for prompting themselves, without diminish(ing) the agency of those who thrive in an environment where they direct themselves.

Conversations about assessing the learning outcomes specific to First-year Seminars continue with the FSEM Faculty Committee as well as the Central Committee. Because the FSEM student learning outcomes are multifaceted, it is unclear whether faculty who teach FSEM have a shared understanding of the outcomes and what constitutes successful student performances. It is important that FSEM faculty members develop a consensus understanding of the intent and value of the FSEM course and develop measures of student performance that more closely fit this shared understanding.

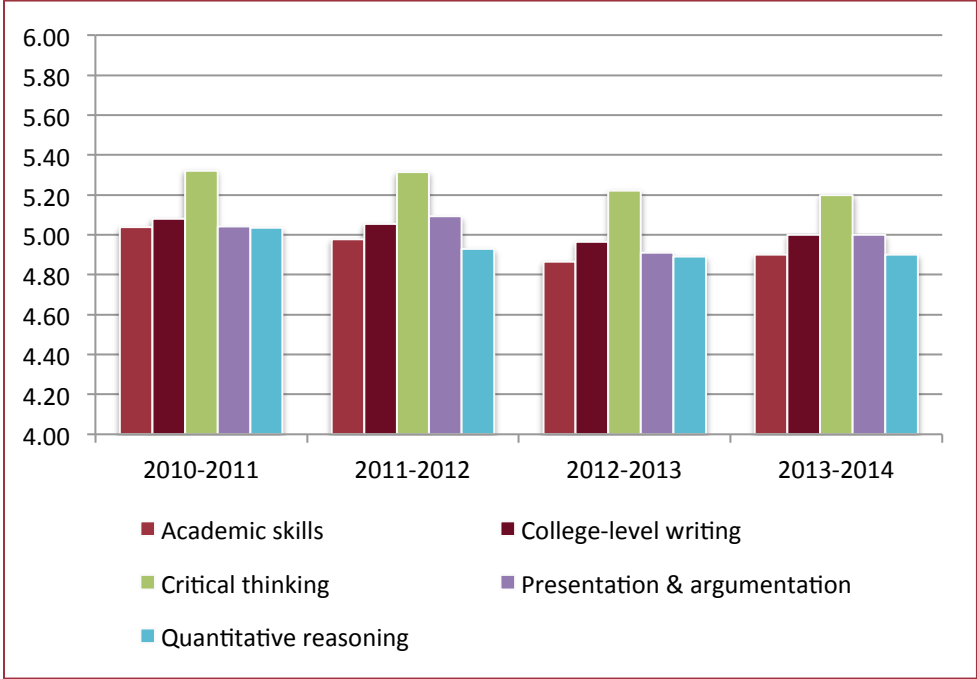
Indirect Assessment Results

First-year Seminar Course and Teacher Evaluations (CTEs) were gathered from the fall sections (approx. 80-85 each fall term). The vast majority of students take FSEM during their first quarter, making the fall quarter the

best opportunity to secure Course and Teacher Evaluation data on FSEM courses. The following are the additional items on the CTE form for all FSEM courses:

- *Critical thinking at a college level was emphasized in my first-year seminar.*
- *Quantitative reasoning at a college level was emphasized in my first-year seminar.*
- *Presentation and argument at a college level was emphasized in my first-year seminar.*
- *The academic skills that I gained in this course will help me to be more successful in future courses at DU.*

Figure 3. FSEM Course and Teacher Evaluations



These ratings provide evidence of the kinds of learning that are emphasized in the FSEM courses. While not all of these elements are specifically required as part of every FSEM course, the course ratings show that writing, presentation, critical thinking and quantitative reasoning are consistently introduced as part of the first-year experience. While students report higher than average gains in all of the areas queried, critical thinking ranks as the skill where they gained the most. After critical thinking skills, the highest gains are reported in college-level writing skills and presentation and argumentation skills. Skills that have lower gains tend to be general academic skills and quantitative reasoning.

Although these consistently high ratings provide evidence of having met the FSEM learning outcomes, the CTE items were not designed specifically to address the Common Curriculum learning outcomes of the course. Originally, these items were included to provide feedback to the program committee regarding the kinds of activities that were common in the courses. These findings provide evidence that support the learning outcomes

for the FSEM course by showing that students are introduced to the important skills of the academic intellectual community.

Recommendations

After considering the direct assessment evidence from the SLO outcomes and the indirect assessment evidence from the course and teacher evaluations, the FSEM committee has made several recommendations. First, additional guidelines for FSEM faculty should be developed. For example, a document/handout could be developed for all FSEM faculty emphasizing the purposes of FSEM relating to student engagement. In particular, faculty should be encouraged to construct their courses in ways that create intellectual challenge, to convey the faculty member's own academic passion for the course topic, and to introduce students to the academic community. Second, because the most important outcomes for FSEM (student engagement and the development of a University of Denver academic identity) are not performance-based, gathering self-reported information on behavior and perceptions may be a better approach to assessing this component of the Core Curriculum. Likewise, it may be useful to ask faculty to reflect upon the student engagement process in their FSEM. Finally, revising the learning objectives for increased clarity may be beneficial, along with a broader discussion of common expectations for learning in FSEM.

Writing and Rhetoric

The WRIT 1122 and WRIT 1133 sequence of courses is offered through the University Writing Program. First-year students typically take WRIT 1122 in the winter quarter and WRIT 1133 in the spring. At the end of each course, students turn in a digital portfolio containing pieces of writing taken from the work produced in each course. The papers are selected to demonstrate proficiency on a key course goal. For WRIT 1122, three writing samples are included with a portfolio introduction, which analyzes the other pieces and persuasively explains how they demonstrate the writer's facility with rhetorical strategies. For WRIT 1133, four pieces are selected and the portfolio introduction analyzes the other three by either discussing how the pieces demonstrate proficiency with course goals, or by reflecting on their learning during the course. These digital portfolios provide the learning artifacts that are the basis for assessing first-year writing.

From 2007-2013, the Writing Program assessment process involved scoring a random sample of 15-20% of the portfolios, using rubrics that program faculty developed for key course goals. A group of 5-8 writing faculty

gathered each June to score portfolios and prepare an annual report, a copy of which went to the Director of Academic Assessment and which was the subject of two faculty meetings the following fall. The program continues this assessment as internal research, now on an every-other-year basis. A full description and results appear in Appendix B. Following are the components of the 2007-2013 and continuing internal assessment process:

In 2014, the Writing Program's Curriculum and Assessment Committee recommended changes to the assessment process to be implemented for the 2013-2014 academic year. As in the past, all students complete digital writing portfolios. Faculty members each select three portfolios from their WRIT 1133 courses, one each that demonstrates strong, average, and weak work. Faculty meet to discuss and reflect on the student work and to provide recommendations at both an individual instructor level (e.g., changes in pedagogy) and a program level (e.g., changes in goals, syllabi, professional development). Faculty members write reflections based on their reviews and the group and share the reflections with the Curriculum and Assessment Committee.

In addition to this extensive qualitative assessment for the Writing Program, faculty complete assessment reports on student performance specifically related to Common Curriculum goals. After using rubrics to evaluate student performance on course portfolios and activities, faculty complete an online form reporting how many students demonstrated *excellent*, *good*, *competent*, and *weak* performance on the Common Curriculum student learning objectives. Recommendations that involve assessment processes, learning objectives, or the Common Curriculum are given to the Central Committee.

Direct Assessment Results

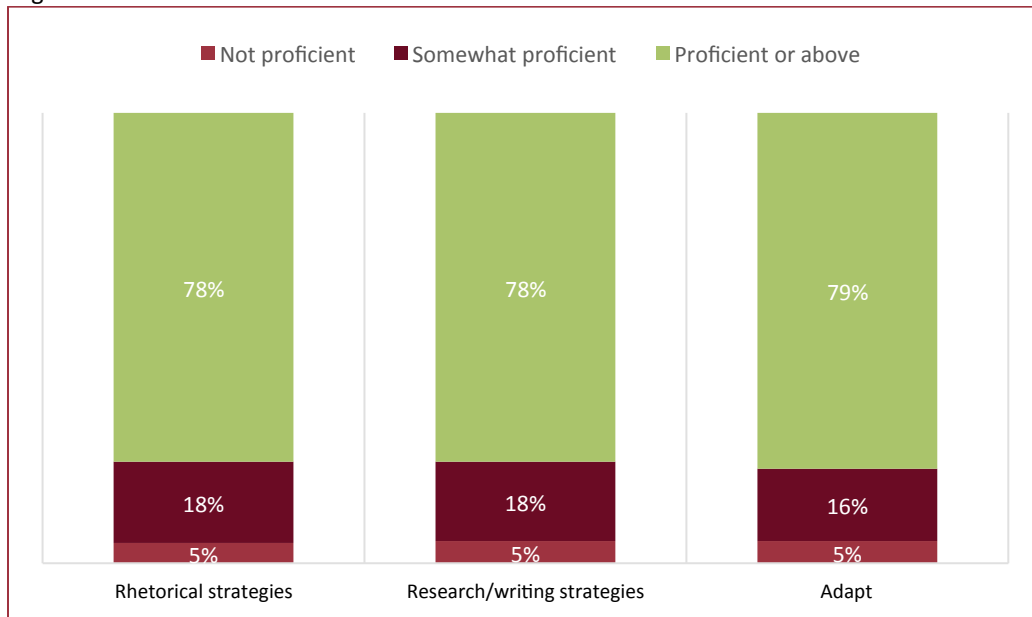
The following learning objectives are associated with the WRIT component of the Common Curriculum:

- **SLO1:** *Analyze strategies used in a variety of rhetorical situations and employ those principles in their own writings and communications.*
- **SLO2:** *Analyze research and writing strategies used in a range of academic traditions and use those strategies in their writings.*
- **SLO3:** *Adapt, to specific situations, a strong repertory of writing processes, including generating, shaping, revising, editing, proofreading, and working with other writers.*

Figure 4 shows that students demonstrate nearly uniform proficiency in the three learning outcomes. Indeed, the WRIT component is one of the Common Curriculum components showing the greatest amount of student proficiency.

Figure 4. Writing and Rhetoric Assessment Outcomes

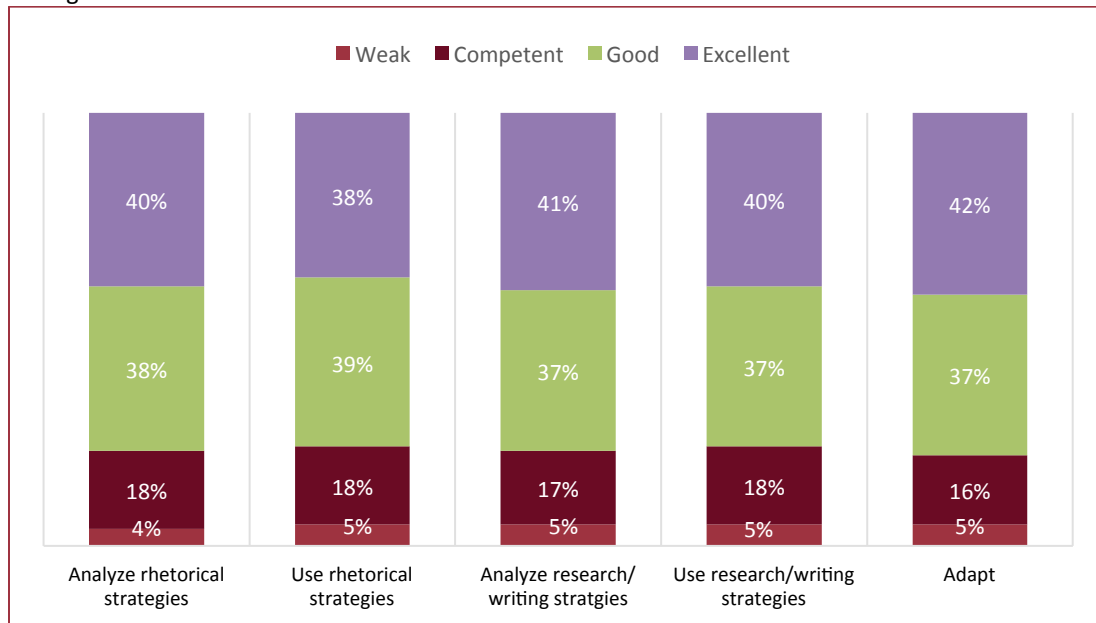
Note: Average scores across WRIT 1122 and WRIT 1133.



In order to assess student performance in a more granular way, the first two SLOs were each divided into two components. Again, Figure 5 shows near uniformity in the pattern of proficiency levels across the learning outcomes for the Writing and Rhetoric Common Curriculum component.

Figure 5. Writing and Rhetoric Outcomes, Subdivided

Note: Average scores across WRIT 1122 and WRIT 1133.



Indirect Assessment Results

Course and teacher evaluations were gathered from winter sections of WRIT 1122 and spring sections of WRIT 1133. Again, although there are sections of these courses in other terms, the vast majority of students take WRIT courses at these times. The pertinent items on the CTE form for all WRIT courses are as follows:

- *I completed a substantial amount of writing in this course.*
- *The course enhanced my understanding of writing and rhetorical strategies.*
- *The course enhanced my writing abilities.*
- *The course enhanced my skills of critical thinking and analysis.*
- *The instructor showed a commitment to my development as a writer.*
- *I revised papers after receiving feedback from the professor or my peers.*

Figure 6. WRIT Course and Teacher Evaluation Results

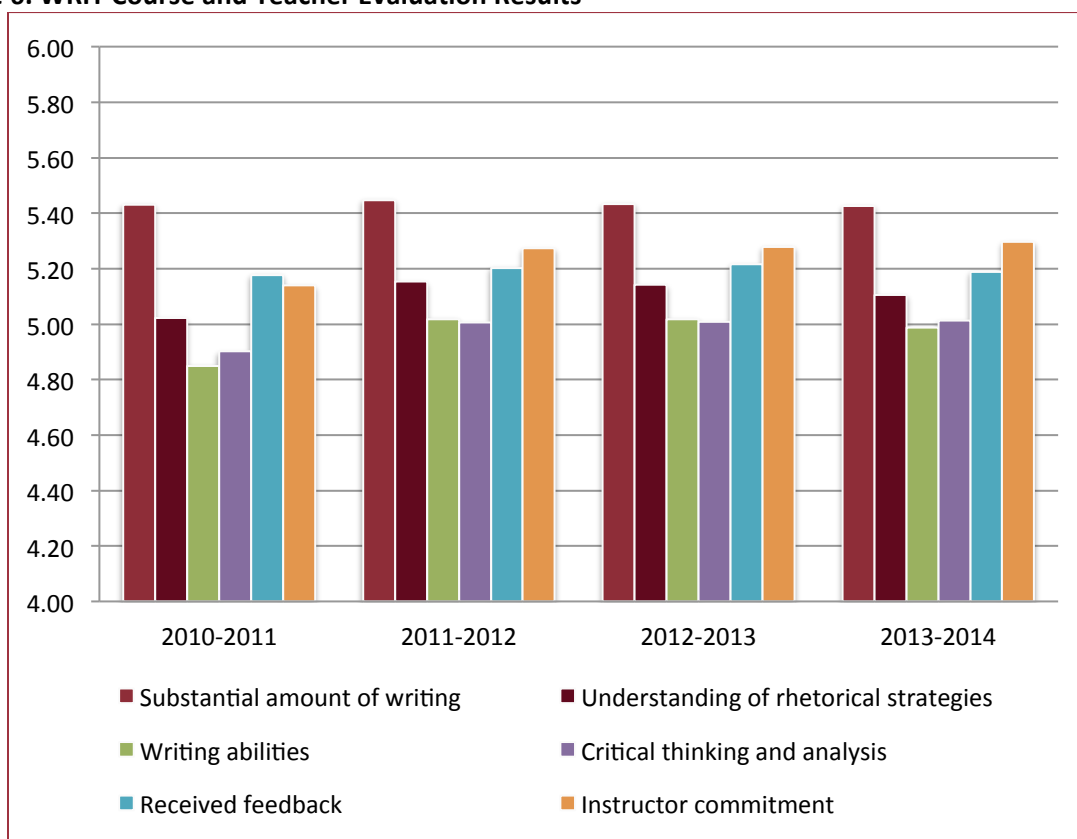


Figure 6 shows that the evaluation pattern for the WRIT courses has remained consistent for the last four years. Respondents report higher than average levels of agreement on all items, but most strongly agree that they completed a substantial amount of writing in the course. They also strongly agree that their instructors show commitment to their development as a writer.

Interpretation

These findings from the direct and indirect assessments of the Writing component show that students successfully met the outcomes for the WRIT component during 2014. The writing faculty noted a gap between the range of these scores and the range of previous assessments. In previous years, when faculty scored randomly selected portfolios on course goals closely related to these outcomes, the combined ratings were not as high. For example, the 2013 portfolio scoring found 11% poor/weak and 19% very strong. The faculty spent considerable time discussing that gap, generally attributing some of it to a small amount of idiosyncratic scoring (an adjunct, for example, who rated all but one student excellent), and some of it to the fact that in making overall judgments, faculty were able to apply knowledge of student performances on exercises, drafts, presentations, and discussions that didn't factor in portfolios. They also noted that the Common Curriculum

outcomes are more broadly worded than the program's specific individual course goals and that, as a result, they invite more extrapolation. In general, faculty did not believe this assessment approach added as much value to their teaching as did either the individual portfolio scoring of specific course goals or the newly instituted qualitative approach, either for themselves individually or for the program in interpreting the combined results.

As previously mentioned, students report nearly identical results on the course evaluation items queried for the four academic years. While respondents report higher than average levels on all of the items, they most strongly agreed with the statement, *"I completed a substantial amount of writing in this course."* They also reported that the WRIT course delivered gains in critical thinking, writing abilities, and their understanding of writing and rhetorical strategies. Again, a review of the learning outcomes for the WRIT courses suggests that, although these findings provide strong indirect evidence of learning in these courses, the CTE items are not directly connected to the specific learning outcomes for the courses.

The most compelling actions from the assessment processes have occurred at the individual instructor and course level, where nearly all 26 faculty members described changes they plan to make in their course design and pedagogy. Following the individual written portfolio reflections and following extended small and large group discussions, faculty submitted a description of their changes. Following is a sample from six faculty members.

- It reminded me that perhaps I could be more transparent with my students about what I value. There is a way, I'm sure, and one that I'll work toward, to make my grading rubrics more in line with what I wrote in this assessment activity.
- To be honest, the process of reading artifact essays and discussing patterns and gaps with a small group of other faculty was much more valuable to me than the aggregate numbers that come from scoring. When I saw, up close, the vast differences in my students' demonstration of synthesis, I recognized that I need to spend more time on synthesis.
- The nuance was in how I looked at research. The processes of doing research are something that I value and teach, but seeing things that I ask my students to do but don't teach in class (although I teach in responding to students in written comments) makes me rethink how I might offer students more direct instruction for interpreting research findings.
- I found that I value style as a marker of excellent writing, but it is not integral to my teaching, which emphasizes higher order concerns (audience, purpose, writing process, evidence, etc.). I find this discrepancy disconcerting and feel compelled to adjust my teaching to help students recognize the connections between form and content.
- For example, I might include some activities where students are able to revise in class, I might add additional peer reviews, or I might further make sure that my main energy in commenting papers is directed at making sure that this work will be revised further (rather than in putting primary commenting energy into justifying final grades). This seems to point towards possibly continuing a portfolio style grading process, rather than grading papers individually.
- I do think that this process has helped me further understand my own teaching goals—so I can more honestly talk to my students about what I value, what I think determines "good writing" and successful learning. I will

also adjust my learning objectives (I include these in my syllabi in addition to the program's course learning objectives) to make these personal pedagogical goals transparent.

The portfolio reflective analysis, both in individual writings and in the resulting faculty discussion, also confirmed that students are achieving category outcomes, with faculty indicating that they have to choose among many strong student portfolios and relatively few weak ones. Research, audience, context, and source use most clearly differentiated the strongest student portfolios from the weakest.

Recommendations

In order to better align Common Curriculum goals with the Writing Program goals, we plan to offer faculty development activities on this topic. The Writing Program has weekly required faculty development meetings each fall, and the Curriculum and Assessment and the Teaching Support Committees plan to focus on issues related to assessment. Another recommendation is to propose revisions to the Central Committee in the student learning outcomes themselves. The WRIT assessment process suggests a slight disconnection between the Common Curriculum outcomes and the specific course goals for the WRIT sequence. The latter, which certainly embody the former, are more specific and easily assessed, yielding assessment information that the faculty have found useful. At the time of this report, the Writing Program's Curriculum and Assessment Committee is drafting revisions to those outcomes. If the outcomes as presently stated still emerge as best, the group is considering an assessment approach that faculty would find more useful while still explicitly addressing those outcomes.

Foreign Language

Most students take a full year of foreign language (12 credits) at the introductory level in order to fulfill the language requirement of the Common Curriculum. Foreign language courses are under the purview of the Department of Languages and Literatures within the Division of Arts and Humanities. The assessment of the language requirement is coordinated through the Center for World Languages and Culture (CWLC), and additional language courses are offered through the CWLC and through the English Language Center.

In the fall of 2013, foreign language program representatives met to discuss the assessment process and results from the previous year. Many of the programs were unsatisfied with the data being gathered and the representatives developed a new assessment process. Because each language has a unique pedagogical

approach and different expectations for achievement in the first year, the representatives decided that the assessment process should account for these differences. The revised assessment process mirrors that of the other component areas, but begins toward the end of the third course (1003) in the initial language sequence for every language. Instructors use criteria defined by each language faculty to assess five elements of language learning: speaking, listening, reading, writing, and cultural learning. The data are then shared with various campus stakeholders as outlined previously.

A separate process is currently in development for assessing English language learning for international students. A newly approved set of culture and language courses facilitates transition for international students (some of whom must complete pre-collegiate English language courses in order to be fully admitted to the University). A draft plan for assessment of learning in these courses has been developed, and data will be gathered during the 2014-2015 academic year.

Direct Assessment Results

The assessment of student learning in the languages addresses two Common Curriculum learning outcomes:

- **SLO1:** *Based on learning samples at the start and end of the first year of language, students will demonstrate increased proficiency in a language of choice in a specific skill (e.g., writing, speaking, listening or reading).*
- **SLO2:** *Demonstrate proficiency in learning about a culture as embodied in a skill (e.g., writing, speaking, listening or reading) in a language of choice.*

Figure 7 provides the overall proficiency results for both student learning outcomes. Taken as a whole, the assessment results show that the great majority of students are demonstrating proficiency in writing, speaking, listening, and reading, as well as in cultural skills. The results also show that fewer students are proficient in writing and listening than in the other areas.

A more detailed picture emerges in Figure 8, which shows proficiency differences by language. Students in Russian demonstrate the highest levels of proficiency, while students in Arabic demonstrate the lowest levels of proficiency.

Figure 7. Overall Foreign Language Proficiency Results

Note: Data unavailable for Spanish speaking skills and Hebrew culture skills.

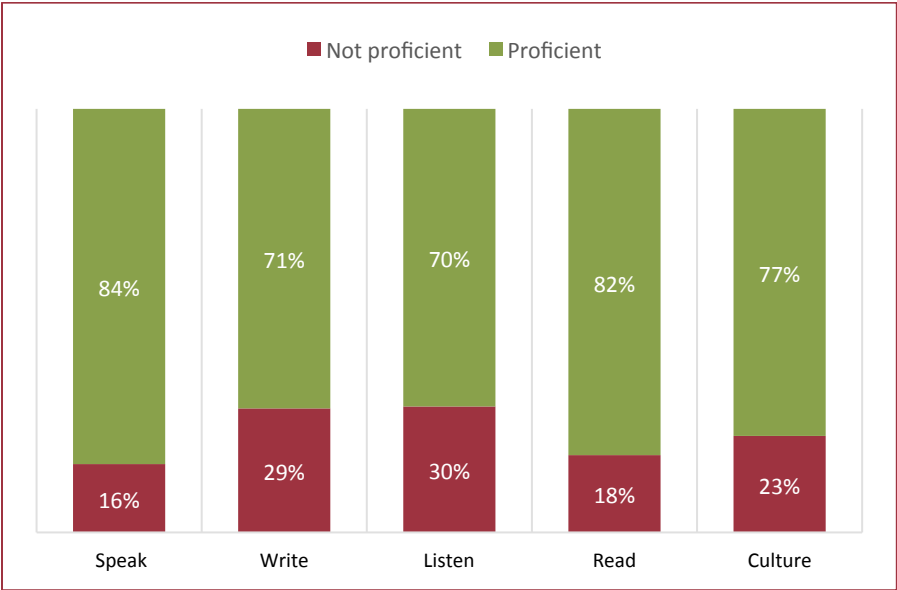
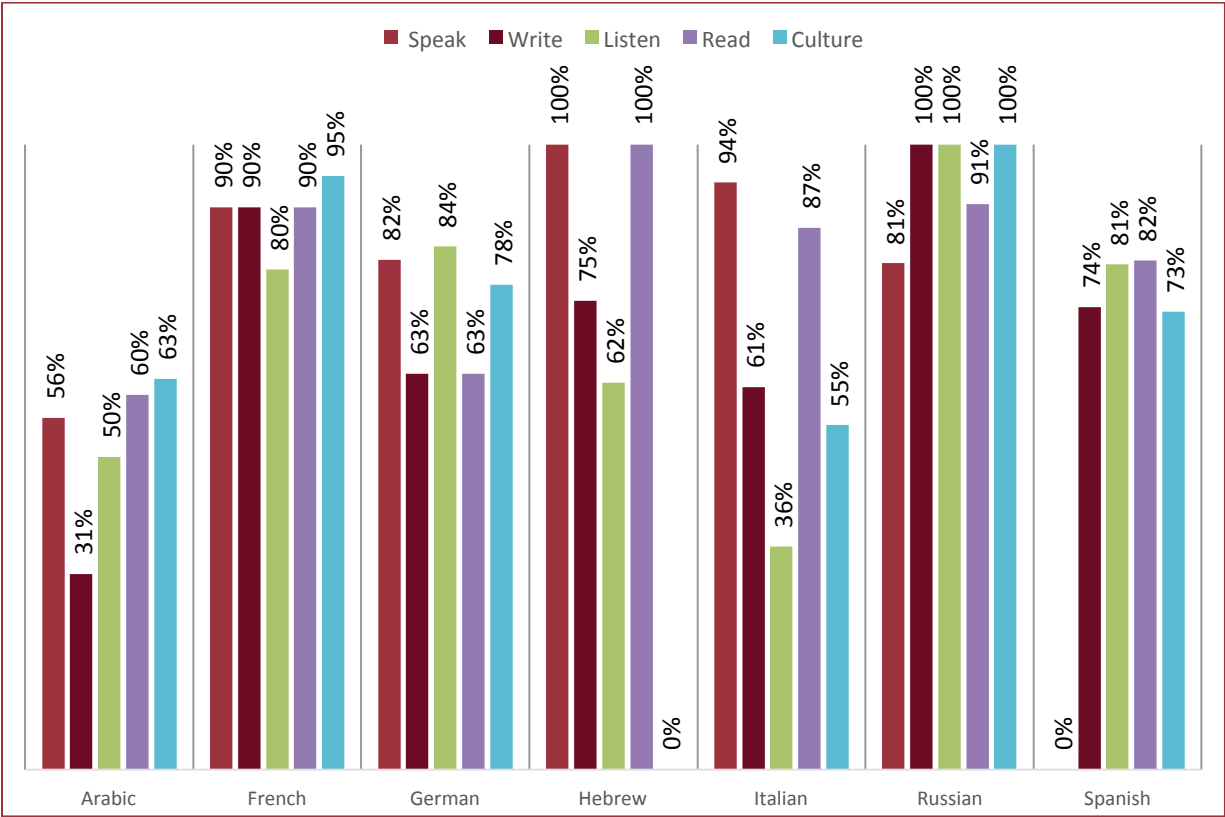


Figure 8. Foreign Language Proficiency Results, By Language

Note: Data unavailable for Spanish speaking skills and Hebrew culture skills.



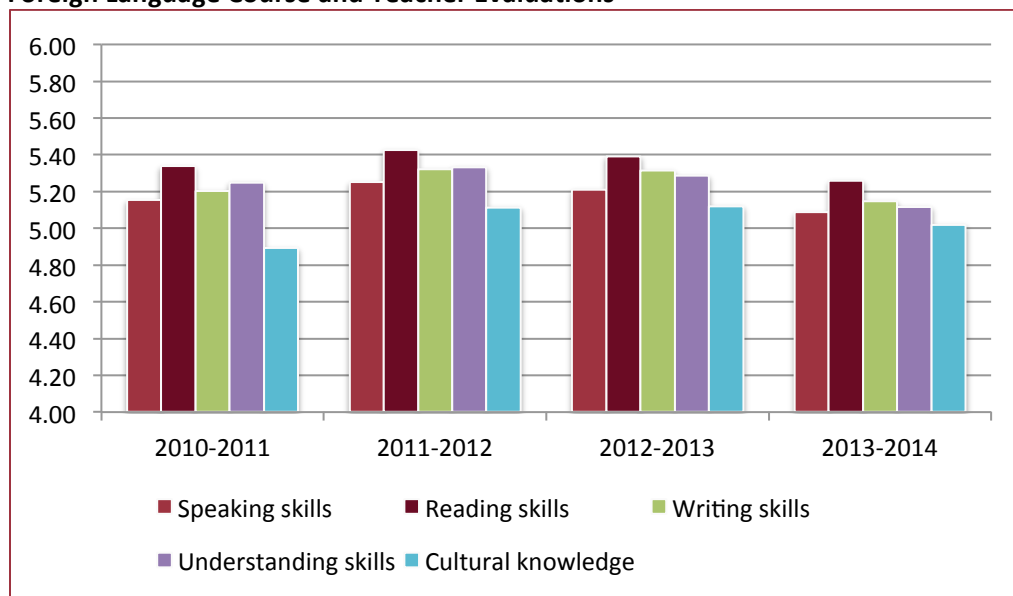
Indirect Assessment Results

First-year Foreign Language course and teacher evaluations were gathered from the spring quarter 1003 courses. This course represents the end of the first year of language instruction and provides a good opportunity to gather information on perceived student learning. The following are the additional items on the CTE form for all LANG courses:

- *In this language, I am acquiring the ability to understand simple spoken interactions.*
- *In this language, I am acquiring the ability to read simple texts.*
- *In this language, I am acquiring the ability to speak about everyday subjects.*
- *In this language, I am acquiring the ability to write simple texts.*
- *I am acquiring a basic knowledge of the relevant society and culture*

Overall, students have consistently reported that they are showing greatest gains in reading skills, while they are gaining less knowledge about the relevant society or culture, relative to the other skills.

Figure 9. Foreign Language Course and Teacher Evaluations



Interpretation

In general, the language faculty reported that these results are both representative of their students' achievements and indicative of effective overall curricula. Because of the differences in language difficulty and differences in the size of the populations in each program, it is reasonable to expect quite a bit of variation in

student performance. For example, low numbers of proficient students in writing for Arabic are consistent with the comparatively more modest goals of the first year in that language.

In some specific areas, the faculty noted some concern for results that were lower than expected (such as writing in German or Italian). For programs with multiple sections (e.g., Spanish, French), a lack of standardization regarding the type of assignments used for assessment or the use of rubrics was identified as a potential problem. In some areas (e.g., cultural learning), the faculty noted that the lack of clear teaching expectations or definitions may have contributed to the results.

Compared to the other results, the CTE items for the LANG courses are the most closely tied to the learning outcomes for that component of the Common Curriculum. They provide strong support for student learning and also suggest some possible gains in cultural learning over the past few years. Students report higher than average gains in all of the queried skills. No single skill stands out among others, as has been the case with critical thinking in the FSEM course. The highest reported gains are consistently found in reading skills, while the lowest reported gains are consistently in *“acquiring basic knowledge of the relevant society and culture.”* Overall, students in foreign language classes perceive increased facility with foreign language skills by the end of the first-year curriculum.

Recommendations

In response to the assessment findings, individual language programs recommended specific changes to the assessment processes and the curriculum. Following are examples of the specific changes detailed in the individual assessment reports (all reports are included in Appendix C):

- Development and/or revision of rubrics for assessing student performance
- Creation of additional writing and reading assignments
- Providing more opportunities for students to practice writing in the language
- Gathering of additional cultural materials and resources
- Integration of cultural concepts earlier and more frequently in the program
- Creation of a common cultural theme for each class (1001,1002, 1003)
- Standardization of assessments
- Development of common exam questions for languages with multiple sections
- Investigate opportunities for “real” communication with local cultural communities

The foreign language program faculty representatives met in 2014 to review the new assessment approach and to consider additional changes. There was a broad discussion of a variety of issues including the meaning and measurement of cultural proficiency, the general meaning of student proficiency in the first year, the variability in difficulty of language acquisition across different languages, and the usefulness of assessment data in

informing curricular decisions. The faculty supported the current practice of defining student proficiency separately within each language program. In order to aid in the comparability of the results across languages, they created a common definition of proficiency: *proficiency in a language skill indicates that the student is prepared to advance to the next level of study in that aspect of the language.*

The language program faculty representatives suggested changes to the student learning outcomes that would clarify assessing and discussing student learning across the languages:

SLO1

- Current - Based on learning samples at the start and end of the first year of language, students will demonstrate increased proficiency in a language of choice in a specific skill (e.g., writing, speaking, listening or reading).
- Revision - Students will demonstrate basic proficiency in a language of choice in the following skills: writing, speaking, listening and reading.

SLO2

- Current - Demonstrate proficiency in learning about a culture as embodied in a skill (e.g., writing, speaking, listening or reading) in a language of choice.
- Revision - Demonstrate proficiency in learning about a culture associated with a language of choice.

In addition, the committee expressed an interest in a larger discussion of the purpose of the language requirement in the Common Curriculum.

Analytical Inquiry - The Natural & Physical World

Courses that meet the Analytical Inquiry - The Natural & Physical World (AI-NP) requirement include several in computer science (CS), mathematics (MATH), and philosophy (PHIL). Because these disciplines represent three different divisions /schools, responsibility for assessment is located at the department level, although administrative oversight is located in the Division of Natural Sciences and Mathematics. The assessment process for this area of the Common Curriculum focuses exclusively on courses for non-majors that fulfill the requirement and follows the general pattern outlined in Figure 1.

Direct Assessment Results

The following learning outcomes are associated with the AI-NP component of the Common Curriculum:

- **SLO1:** *Apply formal reasoning, mathematics or computational science approaches to problem solving within mathematics or computational science, and other disciplines.*

- **SLO2:** *Understand and communicate connections between different areas of logic, mathematics or computational science, or their relevance to other disciplines.*
- **SLO3:** *Communicate formalisms in logic, mathematics or computing sciences.*

Overall results for the AI-NP component show that students demonstrate the most proficiency in SLO1, while they are least proficient in SLO3, *communicating formalisms in logic, mathematics or computing sciences*. In addition to the overall results, the Mathematics, Computer Science, and Philosophy departments have also submitted their results. The results by department show stark differences in student proficiency levels (Figure 11).

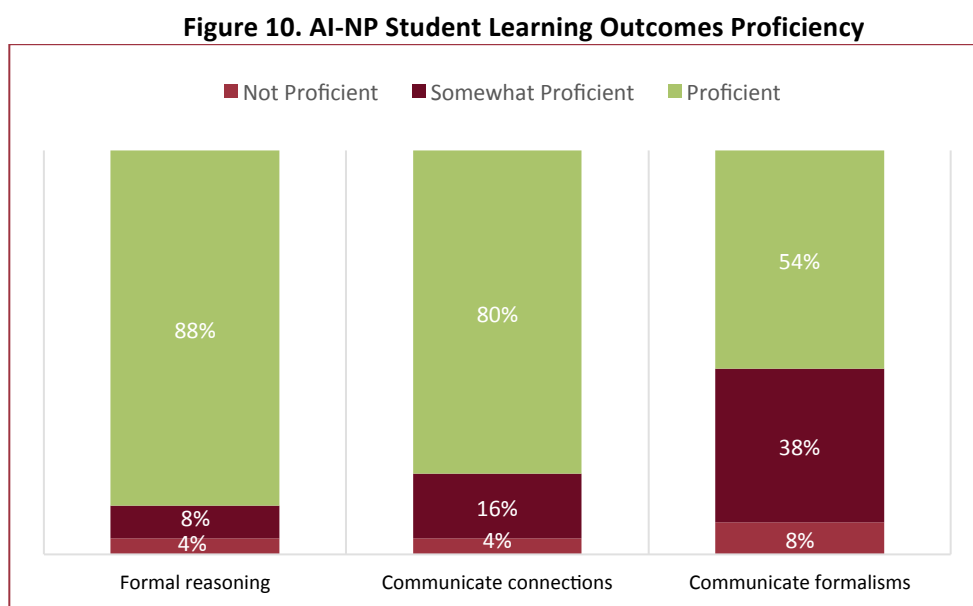
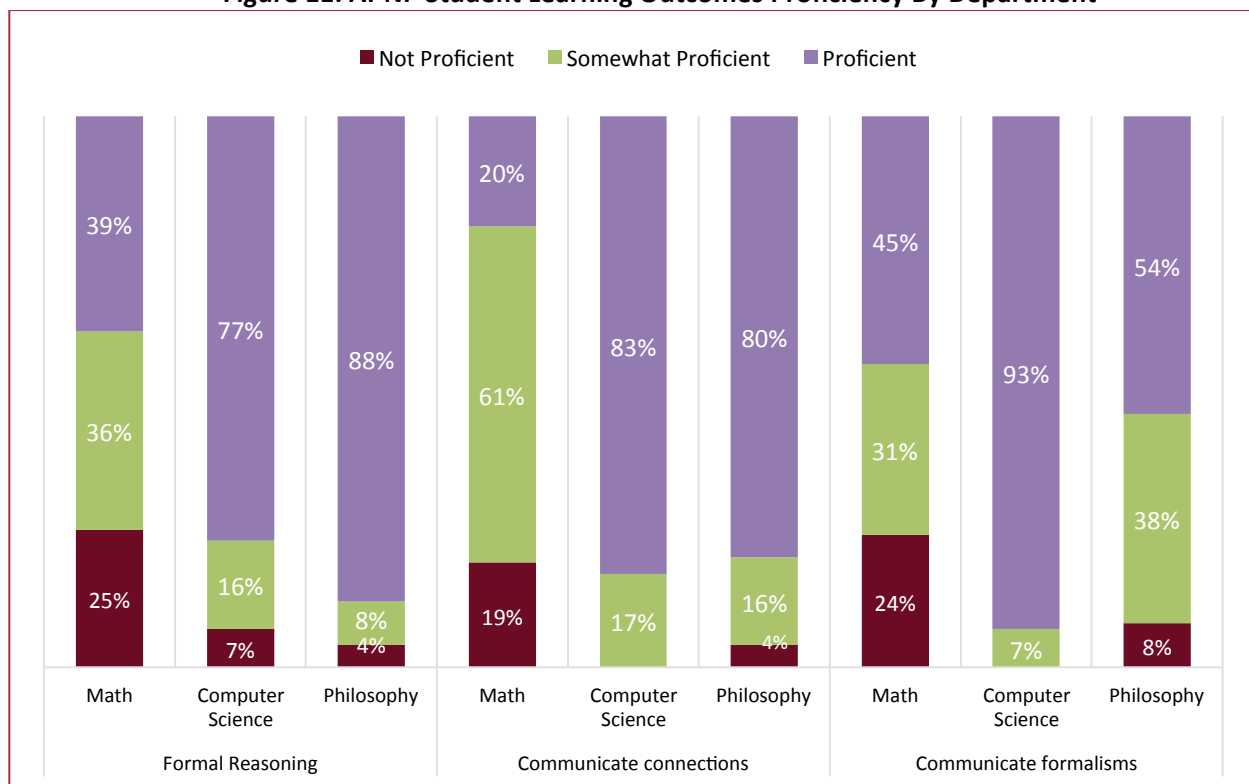


Figure 11 shows that students in Mathematics demonstrate lower than average proficiency in all three of the SLOs. There are clear differences in proficiency levels depending on department. Students in Philosophy were more proficient in SLO1 than in the other two, while students in Computer Science were proficient across the SLOs, but particularly in SLO3. This demonstrates a clear need for continued cross disciplinary discussion of student learning outcomes, assignments, and rubrics.

Figure 11. AI-NP Student Learning Outcomes Proficiency By Department



Interpretation

In general, all of the departments saw substantial levels of student learning proficiency, but the faculty discussions yielded areas for further exploration. The evidence suggests that some students lacked facility with exponential models. Additionally, faculty expressed concern that the most frequently missed questions may be a consequence of the wording of the questions on the assessment instrument. The exams in different sections of the same course were quite different, which may have generated inconsistencies in student performance. There was an increase in the number of *somewhat proficient* students from winter to spring, which may have been the effect of the use of a new rubric.

Recommendations

Individual departments identified opportunities for improving their AI-NP assessment reports (included in Appendix D). For example, Mathematics faculty recommended reviewing problem wording and notation on the assessment instrument, as well as increasing focus on selected content in class. Computer Science faculty plan to increase the detail in the assessment rubric to more clearly define proficient performance. Additionally, faculty identified the need for greater consistency among exams for the course. In Philosophy, with only a single

class from which to obtain data, the faculty determined that additional tracking of the assessment results was necessary before making recommendations for change.

The representatives from the three departments met with the Associate Dean of Natural Sciences and Mathematics and the Director of Academic Assessment to review the overall assessment of the learning outcomes associated with Analytical Inquiry: Natural and Physical World. The main concerns focused on developing a clear understanding and expectations for the student learning outcomes. In general, the AI-NP committee will continue to work on clarifying the learning outcomes and expectations for this part of the Common Curriculum. The following recommendation was made to the Central Committee:

- **SLO 3** (*Communicate formalisms in logic, mathematics or computing sciences*) should be eliminated as it is too broad and is subsumed by the other SLOs in this area of the Common Curriculum.

Scientific Inquiry - The Natural & Physical World

The Scientific Inquiry - The Natural & Physical World (SI-NP) requirement is met by completing a three-quarter (12 credit) course sequence. Departments in the Division of Natural Sciences and Mathematics (Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Geography), and in the Ritchie School of Engineering and Computer Science (Engineering), offer specialized course sequences designed for non-majors. Each department has the responsibility for assessing its own courses, and administrative oversight for this area is located in the Division of Natural Sciences and Mathematics. The assessment process for this area of the Common Curriculum focuses exclusively on courses for non-majors that fulfill the requirement and follows the general plan summarized earlier in Figure 1.

Direct Assessment Results

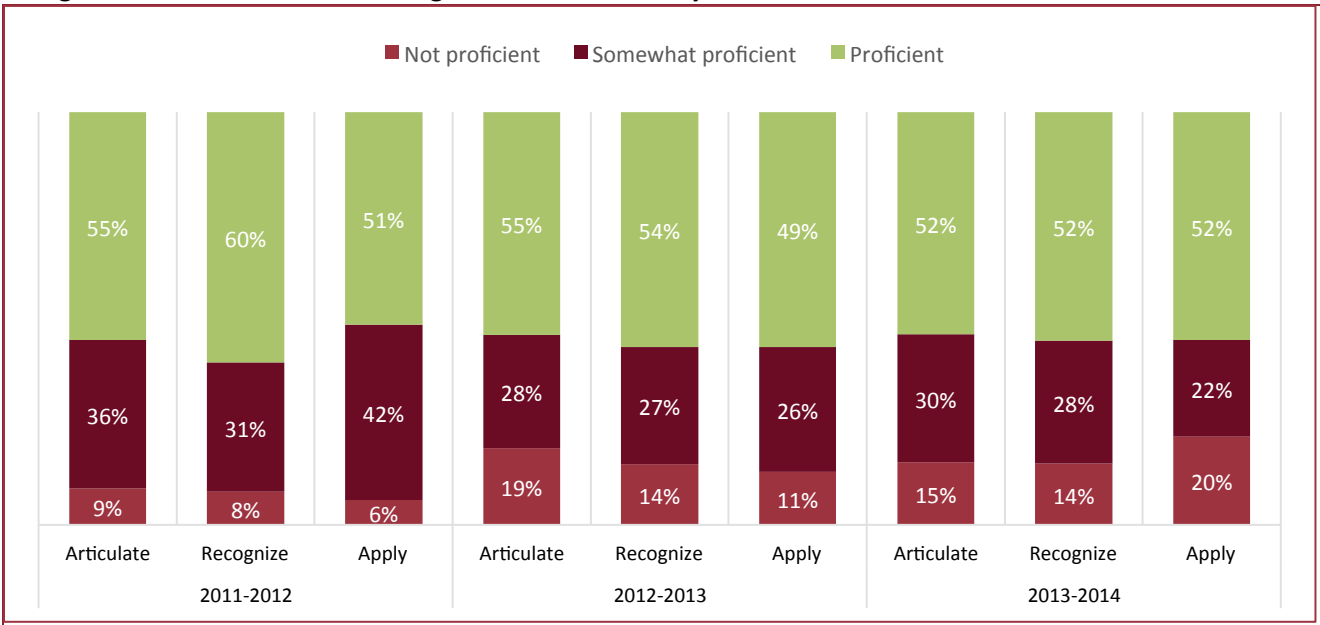
The following learning outcomes are associated with the SI-NP component of the Common Curriculum:

- **SLO1:** *Articulate concepts and principles specific to a field of study in natural science or technology, and effectively apply scientific methods to ask questions, design and perform experiments, or judge arguments.*
- **SLO2:** *Recognize science as a process that considers uncertainty when drawing conclusions from scientific evidence and making predictions from existing data.*
- **SLO3:** *Apply and distinguish between qualitative and quantitative forms of analysis and evidence, and demonstrate skills for using and interpreting quantitative information in various formats based on validation and replication of results.*

Assessment data were provided from SI-NP courses in Biology, Chemistry, Engineering, Geography, and Physics. The courses are offered in sequence, so a comparison of student performance in the fall, winter, and spring

quarters was provided to all departments who offered course sequences in SI-NP (individual SI-NP reports included in Appendix E). An aggregation of the data from all of the courses is presented in Figure 12. Proficiency levels have remained consistent across the three academic years.

Figure 12. SI-NP Student Learning Outcome Proficiency



Interpretation

Because the SI-NP courses are sequenced, there is some expectation that student learning should improve over the three quarters in the sequence, but the aggregate data suggest a consistent level of proficiency. Across disciplines and across the sequences within disciplines, there was great variability in the percentage of students identified as proficient. That variability is thought to be a consequence of variability in assignments used to assess student learning as well as a lack of consensus across faculty regarding the definition of proficiency in this context.

Another possible explanation for variability in student performance can be tied to the student learning outcomes themselves and their relationship to the content of courses in different disciplines. It was noted that it is not necessarily the case that all SLOs are equally developed in each course in of the three- course sequence. By the end of the sequence, the student learning outcomes are addressed, however, individual courses may not address each particular outcome.

A final reason for variability lies in the specific language in the SLOs. In addition to individual differences between instructors in their interpretation of the SLOs, several contain multiple components, which makes them difficult to assess in a single assignment in each course.

Recommendations

There are areas of improvement in regards to both the current student learning objectives for SI-NP as well as the types of assessments being used to measure student improvement. The following actions resulted from the faculty discussion:

- Each department has discussed the SLOs and provided suggestions for improving the SLOs. Teaching faculty and department assessment coordinators will refine suggested changes before presenting them to the Central Committee.
- The SI-NP faculty discussed using common assessments across all of the course sequences. The teaching faculty will continue to explore and pilot the idea of a common assessment.

Analytical Inquiry - Society & Culture

Oversight of Analytical Inquiry - Society & Culture (AI-SC) courses lies with the Divisions of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS). Instructors in these courses identify one or more assignments that address the AI-SC common learning outcomes.

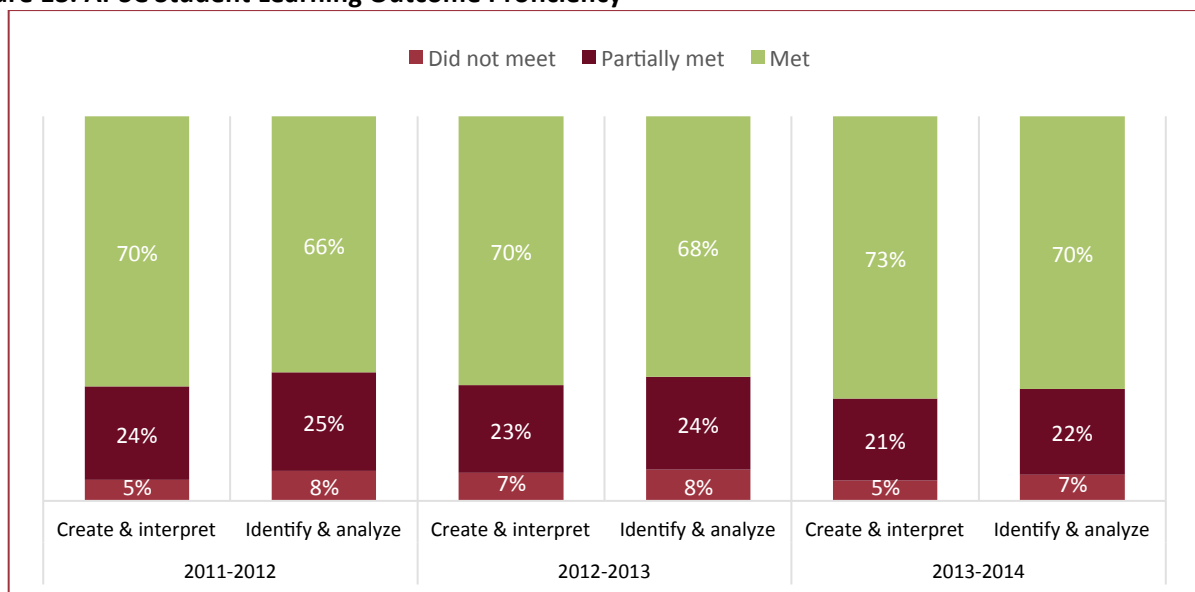
Direct Assessment Results

The following learning outcomes are associated with the AI-SC component of the Common Curriculum:

- **SLO1:** *Demonstrate the ability to create in written, oral or any other performance medium (e.g., art, music, dance) or interpret (e.g., critical analysis) texts, ideas, or artifacts.*
- **SLO2:** *Identify and analyze the connections between texts, ideas, or cultural artifacts and the human experience.*

Over a two-year period, assessment data were submitted for more than 230 courses in AI-SC designated courses. Figure 13 illustrates the overall level of student proficiency across courses.

Figure 13. AI-SC Student Learning Outcome Proficiency



The proficiency results for the AI-SC student learning outcomes mirror the consistency seen in previous component areas. The large majority of students have demonstrated proficiency in both student learning outcomes across all years of study.

Interpretation

The Analytical Inquiry-Society and Culture assessment data indicate that majority of students demonstrate proficiency in the AI-SC learning outcomes. A certain amount of variability in performance is expected given that there is a very wide range of disciplines represented in this category (Art History; English; Gender and Women's Studies; History; Media, Film and Journalism Studies; Music; Philosophy; and Religious Studies). In order to satisfy this requirement, students are required to take two classes, each in different disciplines. As with the other elements of the Common Curriculum, the levels of student proficiency have proven to be less useful to the faculty committee than the narrative comments that accompany each course score. The teaching faculty have indicated some confusion about the assessment process itself; many seem to believe that only one assignment may be used to assess both student learning outcomes. Faculty also would like to better understand whether majors or non-majors are taking the course, as they believe that student motivation may influence proficiency scores.

Recommendations

From some of the faculty feedback, it is clear that additional training should be encouraged so that teaching faculty have a deeper understanding of the AI-SC assessment process. Additional help in designing a rubric that specifies the differences between categories will also be helpful. The teaching faculty are considering whether to

develop a common assessment across all courses to see if that may help eliminate confusion. This will be discussed at length in the current academic year.

Scientific Inquiry - Society & Culture

Oversight of Scientific Inquiry - Society & Culture (SI-SC) courses lies with the Divisions of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. Instructors in these courses agree to identify one or more assignments that address the SI-SC common learning outcomes.

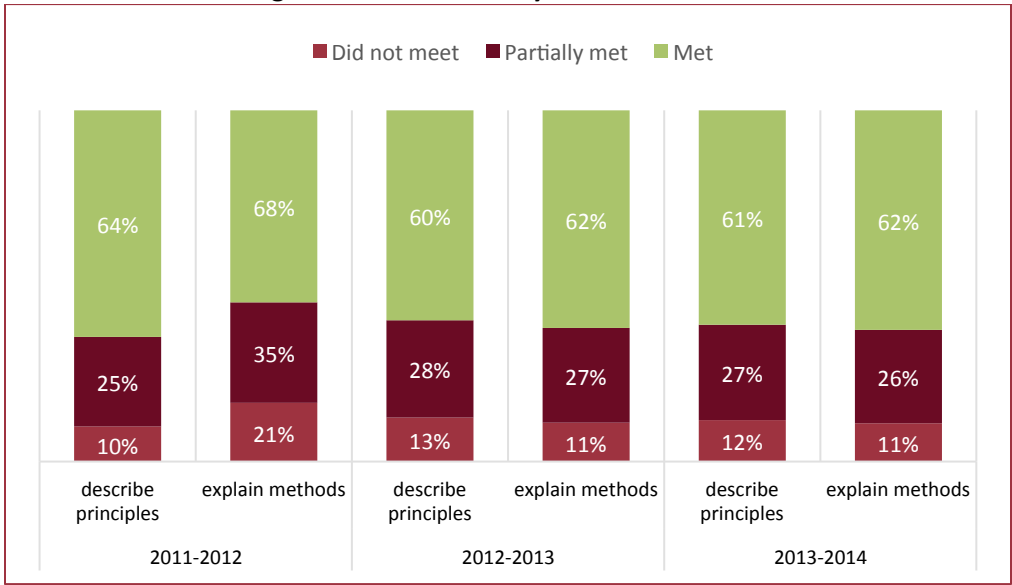
The following learning outcomes are associated with the SI-SC component of the Common Curriculum:

- **SLO1:** *Describe basic principles of human functioning and conduct in social and cultural contexts.*
- **SLO2:** *Describe and explain how social scientific methods are used to understand these underlying principles.*

Over a two-year period assessment data for over 100 courses were submitted for SI-SC designated courses. Figure 14 illustrates overall levels of demonstrated student proficiency across courses since the beginning of the assessment of these courses.

Direct Assessment Results

Figure 14. SI-SC Student Learning Outcome Proficiency



As shown in Figure 14, there is consistency in high levels of proficiency in both student learning outcomes associated with SI-SC, across all three years of data collection.

Interpretation

The SI-SC assessment data illustrate the overall student proficiency levels in this element of the Common Curriculum. In general, we are satisfied that the majority of students demonstrate proficiency for these learning outcomes. A certain amount of variability in performance is expected given that there is a very wide range of disciplines represented in the courses that comprise this category (Anthropology, Communication Studies, Criminology, Economics, Geography, Political Science, Psychology, Public Policy, and Sociology). As with the other elements of the Common Curriculum, the levels of student proficiency have proven to be less useful to the faculty committee as the narrative comments for making informed choices about curricular change. Faculty provided detailed information about best practices on assessment in their classes. Faculty indicate concerns with what they characterize as vagueness in the wording of SLO2. Some faculty members suggest incorporating a common element in SI-SC classes that places each discipline within the context of the social sciences in general.

Recommendations

Consistency in the assessment of SLO1 is difficult because the full range of social science disciplines are required to use the same assessment tool. Faculty are encouraged to explain and clarify the student learning outcomes to students in early class discussions. Teaching faculty would also like to sharpen the learning outcomes, perhaps by better specifying SLO1 or by splitting SLO2 apart. Faculty are also interested in piloting a common assignment for the purposes of assessment. All faculty members should continue to be encouraged to attend quarterly assessment training sessions. The SI-SC committee will revisit the SI-SC learning outcomes in their discussions this academic year.

Advanced Seminar

Similar to the First-year Seminar component, oversight for the Advanced Seminars (ASEM) resides outside a specific academic unit and within its own interdisciplinary committee. The ASEM Committee is comprised by at least one faculty member from each division or school with undergraduate majors and is chaired by the Executive Director of Writing.

Like First-year Seminars, ASEMs are thematically designed by individual instructors from across the undergraduate disciplines. Proposed courses are reviewed and approved by the ASEM committee. All faculty attend a workshop on teaching ASEM, and there are numerous faculty development opportunities each year. Advanced Seminar instructors identify one or more assignments in their courses that address the common learning outcomes associated with all ASEMs. The components of the ASEM assessment process follow the general process outlined in Figure 1.

Direct Assessment Results

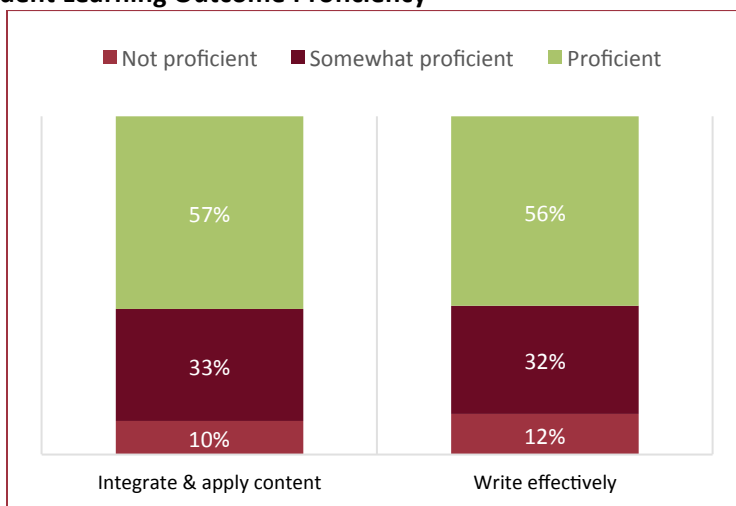
The following learning outcomes are associated with the Advanced Seminar (ASEM) component of the Common Curriculum:

- **SLO1:** *Demonstrate the ability to integrate and apply content from multiple perspectives to an appropriate intellectual topic or issue.*
- **SLO2:** *Write effectively, providing appropriate evidence and reasoning for assertions.*

In 2012-2013, the ASEM committee modified SLO1 from its original wording, in part because of difficulties in assessing the learning outcome as previously stated. The Central Committee unanimously approved this action. Student performance on SLO2 was also reviewed in 2012-13, and showed that only 8% of students were rated not proficient. Committee discussion of ASEM assessment data has been robust for several years, and the Chair generates an annual report and recommendations. The rest of this section is based on the 2014 ASEM Assessment Report.

Figure 15 shows that ASEM faculty reported a reassuring degree of student achievement of the two course goals for 2014. For SLO1, faculty rated 57% of students proficient, 33% somewhat proficient, and only 10% not proficient. For SLO2, faculty rated 56% of students proficient, 32% somewhat proficient, and only 12% not proficient.

Figure 15. ASEM Student Learning Outcome Proficiency



These evaluations were based on direct measures: in winter and spring, 27 ASEM faculty scored 304 student artifacts against a common rubric; participation represented 71% of all students and faculty teaching in that period. Individual faculty each reviewed their assessments and stated explicit plans for revising their curriculum or pedagogy based on that analysis. In addition, in June 2014, a group of 25 ASEM professors convened for a discussion of assessment results. These conversations generated copious notes, which have been analyzed and synthesized below.

Indirect Assessment Results

In addition to the two ASEM course goals, faculty also rated their students on eight “global” measures of academic behaviors, dispositions, and attitudes, a process that bookends one conducted by FSEM faculty. Again the results were reassuring. For example, in terms of “willingness to challenge familiar ideas and existing frameworks,” faculty rated 45% of students as advanced, 35% as intermediate, and 20% as novice. In terms of “ability to consider, synthesize and appropriately use evidence in analysis or problem-solving,” faculty rated 47% of students as advanced, 32% as intermediate, and 20% as novice. In terms of “openness to challenge existing beliefs by adopting new perspectives,” faculty rated 53% of students as advanced, 31% as intermediate, and 16% as novice.

The following are items on the CTE form for specific to ASEM courses:

- *In this course, I gained an ability to integrate and apply knowledge or skills from multiple perspectives to address complex topics or problems.*
- *This course helped me to write effectively, including providing evidence and reasoning for assertions.*
- *In this course, I was challenged to think differently*

Figure 16. ASEM Course and Teacher Evaluations

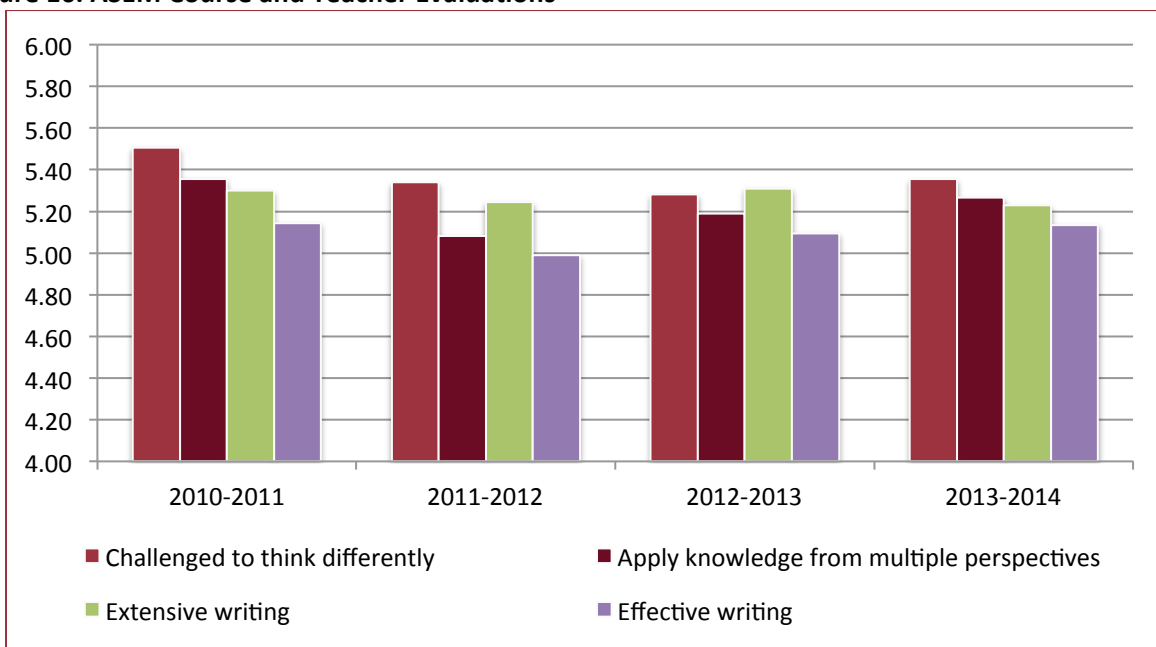


Figure 16 shows the CTE ratings for ASEM courses are consistently strong (generally over 5.0 on a 6-point scale). The ratings indicate that students feel challenged in ASEM courses and believe that the ASEM course helps them develop skills in writing and integrating multiple perspectives. For the Advanced Seminar course, students report the greatest gains in being challenged to think differently than they are accustomed.

The CTE items included for ASEM courses are directly connected to the student learning outcomes for this component of the Common Curriculum. As such, these results provide strong indirect support that the ASEM courses are helping students to meet the specified outcomes. There are no recommendations regarding the ASEM component of the curriculum based on this indirect evidence of learning.

Interpretation

The following points emerged from ASEM instructor discussions and show relative consensus in two or more working groups during the ASEM Analysis Workshop in June 2014. The full report from this Workshop appears in Appendix H.

- Despite positive ratings on the two ASEM outcomes, we should not interpret these results as saying that students are “strong” or “exceptional.” Many faculty members perceived students performing at levels lower than is desirable, even if they are performing adequately. Part of the discrepancy may be due to the assessment categories. Many faculty believe that “proficient” is actually a modest standard, even though it’s the top of three categories.
- Faculty highly value intellectual curiosity and openness, even as they believe that students' intellectual curiosity (Global #8) and willingness to challenge existing beliefs (Global #7) should be more advanced than the Global Ratings might suggest they currently are. A difficulty in ASEM is getting students to do

some of the basic intellectual moves captured in the global assessment (and specifically 1, 7, and 8). Further, ASEM's reasonably differ in terms of how much they do or don't challenge existing beliefs and how much investment students may have in a given perspective.

- Faculty wished students displayed even stronger writing, critical reading, and analytic abilities both coming into ASEM courses and leaving them.
- Several faculty members perceived students in 2014 as less able or engaged than students in previous ASEM's they taught.

Recommendations

Overall, the ASEM Committee should clarify the purposes and uses of assessment. Individual faculty do make formative assessments to directly inform course changes, however more direction should be given in the uses of summative assessment. Increased faculty development opportunities beyond the initial ASEM workshop and regular institutes, brownbag sessions, and workshops would be valuable. These include further clarifying course goals; sharing curricular and pedagogical strategies, especially surrounding the writing component in the course; providing course materials, including annotated examples of student work; and exchanging ideas and practices. Also, the current assessment rubric and course outcomes should be refined to provide a more accurate and useful picture of student performances. On an individual level, most faculty explicitly use the process as part of their course revisions.

On a programmatic level, the assessments have informed at least three faculty workshops. Faculty would benefit from exposure to more strategies, techniques, models, or examples for addressing specific teaching matters. These include teaching revision, peer response, critical reading, and how to analyze and construct arguments. Finally, there are significant opportunities for campus-wide conversations about connections among FSEM and ASEM and WRIT.

Summary

Overall, the Common Curriculum is meeting its stated learning outcomes as evidenced by student performance on direct measures of assessment. Figure 17 shows the proficiency outcomes for the entire Common Curriculum.

Figure 17. Overall Student Proficiency Summary of Direct Assessment

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|------------------------------|
| First-Year Seminar | <i>1 course (4 credits)</i> | |
| | SLO1: | 59% |
| | SLO2: | 65% |
| Writing & Rhetoric | <i>2 courses (8 credits)</i> | |
| | SLO1: | 78% |
| | SLO2: | 78% |
| Language | <i>1-3 courses (4-12 credits)</i> | |
| | SLO1: | 70%-84% |
| | SLO2: | 77% |
| AREAS OF INQUIRY | | |
| | The Natural & Physical World | Society & Culture |
| Ways of Knowing: Analytical Inquiry | <i>1 course (4 credits)</i> | |
| | SLO1: | 77% |
| | SLO2: | 83% |
| | SLO3: | 93% |
| Ways of Knowing: Scientific Inquiry | <i>2 courses (8 credits)</i> | |
| | SLO1: | 73% |
| | SLO2: | 70% |
| | <i>3 courses (12 credits)</i> | |
| | SLO1: | 52% |
| Advanced Seminar | SLO2: | 61% |
| | SLO3: | 62% |
| | <i>1 course (4 credits)</i> | |
| | SLO1: | 57% |
| | SLO2: | 56% |

The areas with the darkest shading illustrate the components of the Common Curriculum where levels of student proficiency are demonstrated to be the highest; the lighter areas show the components with lower levels of student proficiency expressed. Student proficiency is strongest in the Writing & Rhetoric, Language, and Analytical Inquiry areas. There does appear to be room for improvement, particularly in the Scientific Inquiry – Natural and Physical World component, where only 52% of students demonstrated proficiency. As discussed in the SI-NP section above, several recommendations have been made to address these proficiency levels. Taken in sum, the student learning outcome assessment results show that students are largely proficient in the eight component areas of the Core Curriculum.

Indirect Evidence of Learning: National Survey of Student Engagement

The National Survey for Student Engagement (NSSE) provides some additional indirect evidence of student learning. At the University of Denver, the NSSE is administered every two years to samples of both first-year and senior students. Because the NSSE is administered nationally, it allows comparisons between from selected peer institutions. The NSSE has also been administered at the University since 2008, which allows for an examination of trends in student responses. The NSSE trend report is included in the Appendix I.

For many reasons the Central Committee acknowledges the limitations of this kind of evidence in guiding decisions regarding the Common Curriculum. First, the survey provides a broad-based reflection on the undergraduate experience as a whole, and as such is not intended specifically to assess the Common Curriculum. This kind of student information speaks more generally to the University's Undergraduate Student Outcomes, which identify the learning provided by a combination of a student's total academic and co-curricular experiences. Second, there was a small (and decreasing) response rate; in 2014, only 18% of seniors completed the survey - down from 37% in 2008. Finally, there are inherent problems in interpreting self-report measures.

Despite these limitations, indirect measures like the NSSE can be a useful addition to a conversation that is informed by other, more direct measures. The 2014 senior class was the first student cohort to complete their undergraduate experience under the requirements of the Common Curriculum (implemented in 2010). While representativeness is more important than the rate of response, a response rate of 18% is less likely than a higher response rate to represent the opinions of seniors as a whole, therefore limiting the generalizability of the sample. The Central Committee reviewed the relevant NSSE data on the senior class as part of its review of the Common Curriculum.

NSSE Results Summary: 2014 Seniors

We have mapped specific items from the NSSE onto the Undergraduate Student Outcomes, yielding data that while relevant to the Common Curriculum is more indicative of the totality of the undergraduate educational experience at the University.

Table 5 identifies the specific NSSE items used for assessment purposes. For each item, DU student responses are compared to the responses of students from other institutions. For the 2014 administration, DU selected 64 specific institutions to create three peer comparison groups (shown in Appendix I). The three groups included: 1) the institutions identified as DU's institutional comparison peer group used for internal planning purposes, 2) other private institutions with the Carnegie classification of "Research University, High Research Activity", and 3)

other private institutions with undergraduate enrollment between five and ten thousand, the range within which DU falls.

Table 5. NSSE Items Aligned with Undergraduate Student Outcomes

| |
|---|
| <p>#1: Epistemology and Inquiry “Students recognize the provisional nature of knowledge and understand the distinct and complementary character of diverse modes of inquiry, and apply these modes of inquiry to both disciplinary and interdisciplinary problems.”</p> |
| <p>NSSE Items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Solving complex, real-world problems? Thinking critically and analytically? During the current school year, about how often have you done the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Combined ideas from different courses when completing assignments? Connected your learning to societal problems or issues? Connected ideas from your courses to your prior experiences and knowledge During the current school year, how much has your coursework emphasized the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applying facts, theories or methods to practical problems or new situations? Analyzing an idea, experience, or line of reasoning in depth by examining its parts? Evaluating a point of view, decision, or information source? Forming a new idea or understanding from various pieces of information? |
| <p>#2: Quantitative Reasoning “Students describe quantitative relations and apply appropriate quantitative strategies to examine significant questions and form conclusions.”</p> |
| <p>NSSE Items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyzing numerical and statistical information? During the current school year, about how often have you done the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reached conclusions based on your own analysis of numerical information (numbers, graphs, statistics, etc.)? Used numerical information to examine a real-world problem or issue (unemployment, climate change, public health, etc.)? Evaluated what others have concluded from numerical information? |
| <p>#3: Communication “Students develop considered judgments and craft compelling expressions of their thoughts in written, spoken, visual, technologically-mediated, and other forms of interaction.</p> |
| <p>NSSE Items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speaking clearly and effectively? Writing clearly and effectively? During the current school year, about how often have you done the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in? Gave a class presentation? |
| <p>#4: Intellectual Engagement and Reflection “Students demonstrate a commitment to self-sustained learning and cultivate habits, including self-discipline, self-reflection, and creativity which make such learning possible.”</p> |
| <p>NSSE Items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> During the current school year, about how often have you done the following: |

| |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Discussed course topics, ideas or concepts with a faculty member outside of class? ○ Identified key information from reading assignments? ○ Reviewed your notes after class? ○ Summarized what you learned in class or from course materials? ○ Examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views on a topic or issue? ○ Learned something that changed the way you understand an issue or concept? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which of the following have you done or do you plan to do before you graduate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Work with a faculty member on a research project? |
| <p>#5: Engagement with Human Diversity</p> <p>“Students critically reflect on their own social and cultural identities and make connections and constructively engage with people from groups that are characterized by social and cultural dimensions other than their own.”</p> <p>NSSE Items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the current school year, about how often have you done the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Included diverse perspectives (different races, religions, genders, political beliefs, etc.) in class discussions or writing assignments ○ Tried to better understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from his or her perspective? • During the current school year, about how often have you had discussions with people from the following groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ People of a race or ethnicity other than your own? ○ People from an economic background other than your own? ○ People with religious beliefs other than your own? ○ People with political views other than your own? • How much does your institution emphasize the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Encouraging contact among students from different Backgrounds (social, racial/ethnic, religious, etc.)? • How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Understanding people of other backgrounds (economic, racial/ethnic, political, religious, nationality, etc.)? • Which of the following have you done or do you plan to do before you graduate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Study Abroad |
| <p>#6: Community Engagement</p> <p>“Students consider their relationships with their own and others’ physical and social communities as they engage collaboratively with those communities.”</p> <p>NSSE Items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which of the following have you done or do you plan to do before you graduate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hold a formal leadership role in a student organization or group? ○ Participate in a learning community or some other formal program where groups of students take two or more classes together. • About how many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week doing the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Doing community service or volunteer work? • How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Being an informed and active citizen |

Table 6 summarizes all of the findings related to the Undergraduate Learning Outcomes that show a significant difference between DU seniors and at least one of the peer comparison groups. The darker green shading denotes outcomes in which University of Denver students report significantly greater experience or frequency in

engagement, the lighter green shading are areas where DU students report the same amount of engagement, while the white shading denotes areas where they report significantly less experience or engagement.

Table 6. NSSE Comparison Results

| Learning Outcomes | Evidence Supporting Achievement of Outcomes | Group I | Group II | Group III |
|--|---|---------|----------|-----------|
| #1: Epistemology and Inquiry | • Solving complex, real-world problems | | | |
| | • Connecting their learning to societal problems or issues | | | |
| | • Connecting ideas from courses to prior experience and knowledge | | | |
| #2: Quantitative Reasoning | • Reaching conclusions based on their own analysis of numerical information | | | |
| | • Using numerical information to examine real-world problems | | | |
| | • Evaluating what others have concluded from numerical information | | | |
| #3: Communication | • Giving a course presentation | | | |
| | • Preparing multiple drafts of a paper or assignment | | | |
| #4: Intellectual Engagement and Reflection | • Identifying key information from readings | | | |
| | • Reviewing notes after class | | | |
| | • Summarizing what they learned in class | | | |
| | • Examining the strengths and weaknesses of their views on a topic or issue | | | |
| #5: Engagement with Human Diversity | • Trying to understand someone else's views from his or her perspective | | | |
| | • Including diverse perspectives in class discussions or writing assignments | | | |
| | • Having discussions with people of different races or ethnicities | | | |
| | • Having discussions with people with different religious beliefs | | | |
| | • Having discussions with people with different political views | | | |
| | • Understanding people of other backgrounds | | | |
| | • Studying Abroad | | | |
| #6: Community Engagement | • Participating (or planning to participate) in a learning community | | | |
| | • Holding (or planning to hold) a leadership position in a student organization | | | |
| | • Community service or volunteer work | | | |

Insight from the NSSE Results

The NSSE results provide additional evidence that students are achieving the Undergraduate Student Outcomes. To the extent that those outcomes derive, in part, from the Common Curriculum, these results also support the effectiveness of the Common Curriculum. For example, the NSSE data show that DU seniors engage in quantitative reasoning, have developed effective strategies for learning, and interact with those that are different from them. On the other hand, there are a few results from the NSSE that offer the opportunity for additional thought and reaction.

Epistemology and Inquiry

University of Denver students who responded to NSSE are less likely to report that their college experience taught them a great deal about solving complex, real-world problems. One difficulty in interpreting this result is inherent in the fact that the NSSE is a self-report survey. We know that DU students are less likely than other students to perceive the University as teaching them about complex problem-solving, but we do not know whether student perception indicates a weakness in the undergraduate experience, or if it reflects more the student interpretation of the question. In addition, while, the idea of complex problem-solving as a learning goal is reasonable for undergraduate education, it has never been explicitly stated in the learning goals for undergraduates at DU. This item was selected for review because it relates generally to the larger goal of Epistemology and Inquiry. Overall, this finding suggests an opportunity to discuss the role of problem-solving in the Common Curriculum or in the undergraduate experience as a whole. If members of the faculty believe that there should be a stronger focus on this kind of outcome, more robust and direct measures of learning related to problem solving should be investigated.

Human Engagement with Diversity

University of Denver students are less likely to perceive the University as making contribution to their understanding of those with different backgrounds, and have had fewer discussions with those of different races or ethnicities. These findings are offset by other NSSE findings that show DU students engaging with those who are different from them in many ways. In 2013, the University of Denver was ranked #4 by IIE Open Doors for the per capita number of undergraduate students who study abroad. Additionally, the University ranked #18 among Peace Corps volunteer-producing undergraduate medium-sized schools in 2013. Examining these mixed findings related to Human Engagement with Diversity, shows that there is room for conversation and improvement. Inclusive excellence is an institutional priority at the University, and we continue to sponsor a variety of programs and initiatives to educate the entire academic community. The annual Diversity Summit, Internationalization Summit, the Black Male Initiative Summit, and the annual Women's Conference are

examples of regular programming. In addition, a new program associated with study abroad is examining the impact of additional cultural instruction on building students' cultural awareness and sensitivity. When looking at the NSSE trend data for the years 2008-2012, the Committee found improvement over time on items related to diversity, in that there were smaller differences between University of Denver students and students at other institutions. In general, the Committee believes that inclusive excellence is an important University issue, and not one isolated to the Common Curriculum. It is important to monitor and assess students' cultural awareness and their ability to engage with diverse others, but diversity issues need to be integrated throughout the curriculum and within majors as well as in the common courses.

Community Engagement

The last finding reviewed by the Central Committee was that DU seniors report fewer hours per week engaged in community service or volunteering than do students at other institutions. In many ways, this result is contrary to specific direct evidence from other sources. For example, the 2013-2014 Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning (CCESL) annual report notes more 2,500 students (21%) engaged in service opportunities outside of specific community engagement programs. Those students logged over 400,000 hours of service. In addition, the outcome of Community Engagement extends far beyond the outcomes of the Common Curriculum, and deeply manifests the University vision of *"a great private university dedicated to the public good."* Much like inclusive excellence, involvement with the community is a University goal. The programs and opportunities provided through CCESL and other campus organizations are evaluated and assessed at a much broader level, and are not really part of an assessment of the Common Curriculum. Overall, the Committee believes that this single finding, given the limitations of the NSSE instrument, is not strong enough to be the basis for any specific action related to engagement with the community. The University of Denver will continue to engage and to serve the community, and it will continue to use substantial ways of documenting and evaluating the quality of that engagement.

Overall, the review of the NSSE items related to the Undergraduate Student Outcomes provided some additional evidence that the undergraduate educational experience is effective in achieving its stated outcomes. This review did not find strong evidence that spoke directly to opportunities to improve the Common Curriculum. The poor response rate calls into question the representativeness of the respondents to the population of seniors, and therefore limits the generalizability of the findings. Even if we can achieve a higher response rate, and even given the comparative value of the NSSE, we may do well to develop indirect measures that more specifically target Common Curriculum learning outcomes.

Conclusion

The results of the assessment process described in this document demonstrate that the University of Denver Common Curriculum is achieving its goals, even as it reveals room for—and commitment to—improvement in several areas. Direct measures of the Curriculum’s eight components, each conducted with wide faculty participation, show proficiency in student learning. The assessment process has created robust conversations among faculty about what additional or different performances they should expect from students and how course contents and pedagogies could be modified.

In fact, the most positive consequence of the process was that it sparked and sponsored those conversations across campus, most notably across curricular boundaries. Whereas faculty within individual departments and programs regularly talk about teaching and learning within their groups, the multidisciplinary nature of the Common Curriculum and our assessment process required that we interact with broader groups. Sometimes those conversations were difficult, as different values and traditions bring different assumptions. For example, what impressed faculty members in some fields with high expectations as perfectly fine levels of student performance struck faculty in other fields as suggesting concern. Not only did these conversations occur within each of the eight elements, but they also began to occur across them in the process of generating this comprehensive report, which we’re confident will foster an additional layer of campus discussion and action. To longstanding assessments programs and majors, the Common Curriculum assessment process thus sparked an additional dimension of attention to student learning.

As we noted in the introduction, this is the first comprehensive assessment of a curriculum that was implemented in 2010. As the first iteration—and only the first—we now have evidence and reflections on what has worked and what hasn’t: in terms of outcomes, pedagogies, faculty development, and even the assessment process itself. We’re well prepared to begin the next iteration of assessment and we expect to learn more with each succession.

Two categories of recommendations and change have emerged from this study. One centers on the assessment process itself. While the original student learning outcomes for the Common Curriculum were developed with care and considerable deliberation, the assessment process showed that some practices need revision or refinement, either because they didn’t precisely represent what faculty thought was important for the course category or because they couldn’t be meaningfully assessed as stated. Some outcome revisions have already

been approved through the entire process, as in the case of the Advanced Seminar requirement. Others are in progress, as in the First-year Seminar, Foreign Languages, and Writing and Rhetoric components, and we expect that specific recommendations will soon come to the Central Committee.

Another process change concerns the nature of the learning artifacts that were assessed and the rubrics in various component areas. Even with a common set of outcomes and values for each course area, and even with faculty basing their assessments on specific artifacts, the number of different courses and sections necessarily means that judgments are based on different materials. Some groups have had conversations about possibly using some common assignments or artifacts. The challenge, of course, is using something that is organic and integral to the courses and not simply ancillary to student learning, and it is uncertain at this point where those conversations may lead. Still, it's a healthy discussion of how we know what we know about learning. Related to this are questions that have come up about the rubrics being used to evaluate artifacts. While professors generally believe the existing rubrics are being used reliably, they think in some cases that the rubrics may not be capturing the most salient aspects of the outcomes to which they're applied. Several groups are thus revising rubrics.

The second umbrella category of recommendations and change occurs at the level of courses and teaching. The individual assessment reports that constitute the appendices to this document are replete with statements of how faculty have changed content and pedagogy in their own courses as a result of the assessment process. We've summarized a few examples earlier. The simple act of reflecting systematically in one's own courses on student performance in relation to category outcome has been an impetus to revise practice and content. Moreover, looking at data across multiple courses has informed conversations about teaching. For example, what kinds of writing—and of what level of quality—do we expect ASEM students to produce: academic discourse for scholarly readerships, as within disciplines, or researched articles for public readerships? Or what is ultimately the purpose of the language requirement: cultural knowledge grounded in language learning or practical facility reflected in the ability to interact with speakers of other languages? These are rich conversations, and as resolutions are reached, they will alter how courses are taught. Finally, this report identifies a number of needs and opportunities for faculty development, especially as professors better understand the relationships between course categories and the kinds of assignments, learning opportunities, and supports that more directly foster desirable outcomes.

The main next step, of course, will be to make sure this report is widely circulated on campus. It will serve as a basis for revising aspects of the Common Curriculum and teaching within it. Even prior to that, however, it will raise campus awareness of both the Common Curriculum outcomes and the larger Undergraduate Learning

Outcomes from which they derive. It became clear during the assessment process that, even with relatively high promotion of those outcomes, some faculty on campus don't have a clear grasp of them. We perhaps take for granted that intensive discussions five years ago have retained their presence and vitality. Even more uncertain is how visible and meaningful these outcomes are to the very undergraduate students they were designed to serve. To what extent are students aware that individual courses they're taking are part of a larger general education program with carefully articulated goals, and to what extent do they recognize that program as part of larger learning identity for DU graduates? What is the relationship—both direct and perceived—between the Common Curriculum and other aspects of undergraduate education: the major, electives, the co-curriculum? To answer questions like these, we may consider developing some campus-specific indirect measures, given the limitations of national instruments such as the NSSE for providing specific information about our Common Curriculum. That said, we place more value on direct measures of learning and will continue to pursue our best understanding of student learning in our program. Having established, implemented and learned from a successful process, we're confident that our next assessment of the Common Curriculum will be productive and effective.