

2005

## University Studies Annual Assessment 2004-2005

Portland State University. University Studies Program

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University Studies

Assessment Report

2004-2005

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## Executive Summary

During the 2004-2005 academic year, the University Studies program engaged in a number of assessment activities including end-of-term course evaluations at the freshmen, sophomore and senior levels, review of freshmen portfolios, a pilot evaluation of Cluster Courses and a review of student work samples from Senior Capstones. A review of the information generated through these assessment activities reveals that at each level, students feel that University Studies goals are being addressed in their classrooms and that faculty are engaging students through active learning pedagogies.

The end-of-year student evaluations from Freshman Inquiry (FRINQ) reveal that overall students agreed that their Freshman Inquiry course encouraged them to develop skills that are aligned with University Studies goals such as critical thinking, exploring issues of diversity, exploring ethical issues, and communicating through writing and speaking. When asked about their faculty, students agreed that FRINQ faculty displayed an interest in their learning and used a variety of methods to evaluate student progress. Students were more neutral when asked whether faculty helped them understand how the course fit with PSU requirements or whether faculty made clear how topics fit into the overall course. In addition, students reported that FRINQ mentors displayed a personal interest in student learning, asked students to share ideas, and helped students complete assignments successfully.

This year, the FRINQ portfolio review focused on the goals of communication and appreciation of human diversity. The communication goal was evaluated through writing and quantitative literacy. When compared to average portfolio scores from 2003, the last year these goals were evaluated, the average quantitative literacy scores for the 2005 portfolios were higher, the average writing scores were similar, and the average diversity scores were lower.

Students in Sophomore Inquiry (SINQ) courses provide feedback to the program through end-of-term course evaluations. Students in sophomore inquiry courses agreed with most statements about their course including that their courses had explored issues of diversity and ethics, and that they had gained skills in critical thinking. They also agreed that their instructors showed an interest in their learning and used a number of engaging pedagogical approaches. Students were less likely to agree that the course helped them to develop speaking skills, to use resources for solving problems or that faculty inspired students to set challenging goals.

This year, in order to assess the Cluster, a survey pilot was conducted asking students in Capstone courses about their experiences in Cluster courses. Over 60% of students reported that their cluster courses emphasized all of the university studies goals and over 50% agreed that the cluster courses added breadth to their knowledge of the cluster theme, contributed to the interdisciplinary nature of the cluster and made connections to other courses in the cluster including their SINQ course.

Capstone courses were evaluated using end-of-term course evaluations and a content analysis of student final reflections. On the end-of-term evaluation, students in Capstones reported that their instructors used a variety of teaching approaches and generally agreed that their courses addressed the four University Studies goals. A qualitative analysis of comments on the end-of-term evaluation support these findings. Student comments emphasized the importance of social responsibility, an improvement in communication skills, and an awareness of diversity. The analysis of student work samples offers further evidence of student learning related to University Studies goals. The themes reviewers identified represent all four of the goals.

While assessment of the mentor program occurs within the evaluations of FRINQ and SINQ courses, this year an additional assessment involved an analysis of comments from Fall 2005 end-of-term evaluations for FRINQ, SINQ and Transfer Transition courses. The comments reveal that students in each type of course value the mentor's role in providing course-related assistance such as preparing for main class and providing further explanation of difficult topics. For freshmen and students in transfer transition, a personal connection to the mentor was also important, whereas students in sophomore inquiry found discussion and application of theory more helpful.

## Freshman Inquiry Assessment Report

End-of-term evaluations and the summer portfolio review were the two central instruments for assessment of the freshman inquiry courses in 2004-5.

### *Course Evaluations*

Course evaluations in Freshman Inquiry were administered at the end of every term. The data set analyzed includes the time period of fall 2004 through spring 2005. All end-of-term course evaluations were done in the Mentor sessions and took approximately 20 minutes. The course instructor was not present. However, the Mentor was available to answer any technical questions about completing the evaluation, such as pointing students to the secure Internet location to complete the survey. The following table shows how many surveys were completed by students each term, which amounted to over 80 percent completion rate fall and winter term and approximately 60 percent for spring term.

Table A

<b>End-of-Term Course Evaluations, FRINQ 2004-2005</b>	
Fall	n = 832
Winter	n = 796
Spring	n = 507
Total = 2135	

Table B

<b>End-of-Term Course Evaluations, FRINQ 2004-2005</b>	<b>Fall, Mean</b>	<b>Winter, Mean</b>	<b>Spring, Mean</b>
<b>UNST Goals:</b>	<b>n = 832</b>	<b>n = 796</b>	<b>n = 507</b>
Critical thinking	3.9	3.9	4.1*
Acquire skills in working with others.	3.9	4.0	4.1*
Explore issues of diversity.	4.1*	4.1*	4.2*
Develop speaking skills.	3.6**	3.8**	3.9
Develop writing skills.	3.9	3.9	4.1*
Learn to use resources for solving problems.	3.6	3.9	3.9
Learn to analyze and critically evaluate ideas.	3.9	3.9	4.1*
Explore ethical issues.	3.9	4.0	4.2*
<b>Faculty:</b>			
Display interest in students and learning.	4.2*	4.1*	4.2*
Schedule work so students can keep up.	3.7**	3.7**	3.9
Form "discussion groups" to facilitate learning.	4.1*	4.1*	4.1*
Make clear how topics fit into course.	3.6**	3.6**	3.8**
Explain course material clearly and concisely.	3.5**	3.6**	3.7**
Relate course material to real life situations	3.8**	3.8**	4.0
Inspire students to set challenging goals.	3.6**	3.6**	3.8**
Ask students to share ideas with others.	3.9	3.9	4.1*

Provide timely and frequent feedback.	3.8**	3.7**	3.8**
Encourage interaction outside of class.	4.0	3.9	4.0
Use variety of methods to evaluate student progress.	3.9	4.0	4.2*
I understand how course fits into PSU requirements.	3.5**	3.5**	3.6**
<b>Mentor:</b>			
Displayed a personal interest in students and their learning.	4.4*	4.3*	4.4*
Made it clear how mentor session work fits into the course.	4.2*	4.1*	4.2*
Related course material to real life situations.	4.1*	4.0	4.2*
Inspired students to set challenging goals.	3.9	3.9	4.1*
Asked students to share ideas with others.	4.2*	4.1*	4.3*
Encouraged interaction outside of class.	4.0	4.0	4.1*
Help students complete assignments successfully.	4.2*	4.2*	4.3*
Help students feel more comfortable at PSU.	4.3*	4.2*	4.3*
Helped students improve their academic skills.	4.0	4.0	4.1*
The mentor sessions connected well with the class.	4.0	3.9	4.0

\* when compared to 2003-2004 statistically significant *increase*

\*\* when compared to 2003-2004 statistically significant *decrease*

Table B shows that fall of 2004 experienced a statistically significant decrease in the items assessed when compared to fall of 2003, especially in relation to the Unst goals and the faculty course survey section. The decrease, however, was not experienced in the course evaluation section for mentors. Mentors for the most part experienced an increase in course evaluation items when compared to fall of 2003. Winter term of 2005 when compared to winter of 2004 also experienced the same decrease.

Spring term of 2005 saw an increase in terms of statistically significant course evaluation items when compared to spring of 2004. Mentors for the most part experienced a statistically significant increase in all items, except student perceptions about connection between main and mentor classes, although there was no statistical difference. Faculty as an aggregate also experienced an increase in statistically significant items and so did the overall assessment of the Unst goals.

Statistically significant items that decreased the Unst goals section of the evaluations are as follows:

- Make clear how topics fit into course.
- Explain course material clearly and concisely.
- Inspire students to set challenging goals.
- Provide timely and frequent feedback.
- I understand how course fits into PSU requirements.

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 Explain course material clearly and concisely.  
 Inspire students to set challenging goals.  
 Provide timely and frequent feedback.  
 I understand how course fits into PSU requirements.

*End-of-Year Portfolio Review*

The 2005 Summer Portfolio Review was a performance-based program assessment of two of the four major University Studies goals: communications and appreciation of human diversity. The University Studies communications goal was addressed using both writing and quantitative literacy rubrics. This assessment was initiated in the summer of 2005, and was completed in the summer of 2005. All Freshman Inquiry classes share a common end-of-year portfolio assignment that was developed over a period of five years. Although there is some variability, it is used in every class, and certainly in a uniform enough manner to allow for a programmatic assessment.

Informed consent was 100%. Students were informed that participation was voluntary and bore no relationship to course grades; that consent could be withdrawn at any time and that no legal claims were being waived by consenting to participation in portfolio review. Because portfolios can very often, by their very nature, reveal a student's name, students were also informed that the review process could involve the disclosure of identity. However, once data is collected, there is no relationship between student name and aggregate data. Once the consent forms were signed, the information was released to an independent, third-party, for processing.

A random sampling of these portfolios, stratified for each theme, formed the analysis set. Portfolios were selected using a random number generator and a numbered list of consenting students from each Freshman Inquiry class. Compliance with the randomization procedure was virtually one hundred percent.

*End-of-Year Portfolio Review*

Findings by Year:

In terms of the portfolio review, the Quantitative Literacy Rubric indicated a statistically significant increase when compared to 2003. There was no difference in the Writing Rubric when compared to 2003. Unlike the Quantitative Literacy and Writing Rubrics, there was a statistically significant decrease in the Diversity Rubric. Lastly, due to sample sizes not being comparable between teams, comparisons are not recommended.

Quantitative Literacy

Table C

<b>Quantitative Literacy</b>			
Year	N	Mean	StDev
2005*	177	1.99	0.83
2003	151	1.78	0.79

\*when compared to last assessment statistically significant *increase*

\*\*when compared to last assessment statistically significant *decrease*

~ no significant difference

Rate Agreement between 1st and

2nd reads = 93.22%

---

Compared to the prior assessment of the Quantitative Literacy rubric, the above table shows that this year's assessment saw a statistically significant increase.

Table D Writing Average

---

<b>Writing Average</b>			
Year	N	Mean	StDev
2005~	177	3.57	0.84
2003	151	3.40	0.71

---

\*  $p < .05$ , when compared to last assessment statistically significant *increase*

\*\*  $p < .05$  when compared to last assessment statistically significant *decrease*

~ no significant difference

Rate Agreement between 1st and  
2nd reads = 79.10%

---

Table D shows that there was no statistical difference in assessing Writing in 2005 versus 2003.

Table E Diversity Average

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<b>Diversity Average</b>			
Year	N	Mean	StDev
2005**	177	2.02	0.80
2004	162	2.48	0.91

---

\* when compared to last assessment statistically significant *increase*

\*\* when compared to last assessment statistically significant *decrease*

~ no significant difference

Rate Agreement between 1st and 2nd  
reads = 83.62%

---

There was a statistically significant decrease in Diversity according to Table E.

#### Findings by Teams.

The following tables show portfolio review results by teams. Note that the sample sizes are too different in some cases, so comparison is not recommended.

Table F Diversity Average

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<b>Diversity Average</b>			
Team	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
CHAOS AND COMMUNITY	12	2.04	0.66
COLUMBIA BASIN	20	1.93	0.61
CONSTRUCTED SELF	19	2.74	0.79
CYBORG	23	1.72	0.50

---



DESIGN & SOCIETY	17	1.71	0.73
Einstein	13	1.85	0.80
FORBIDDEN KNOWLEDGE	16	2.41	1.10
MEANING & MADNESS	20	2.28	0.77
PATHWAYS/SUSTAIN & JUSTICE	23	1.65	0.73
SEX MIND & MASK	14	2.00	0.62
Total	177	2.02	0.80

Table G Writing Average

<b>Writing Average</b>			
<b>Team</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
CHAOS AND COMMUNITY	12	3.63	0.86
COLUMBIA BASIN	20	3.68	0.95
CONSTRUCTED SELF	19	3.39	0.91
CYBORG	23	3.37	0.91
DESIGN & SOCIETY	17	3.41	0.78
Einstein	13	3.65	0.43
FORBIDDEN KNOWLEDGE	16	3.97	0.81
MEANING & MADNESS	20	3.75	0.84
PATHWAYS/SUSTAIN & JUSTICE	23	3.50	0.98
SEX MIND & MASK	14	3.50	0.52
Total	177	3.57	0.84

Table H Quantitative Literacy Average

<b>Quantitative Literacy Average</b>			
<b>Team</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
CHAOS AND COMMUNITY	12	1.42	0.56
COLUMBIA BASIN	20	2.40	0.94
CONSTRUCTED SELF	19	2.29	0.51
CYBORG	23	2.74	0.99
DESIGN & SOCIETY	17	1.79	0.81
Einstein	13	1.62	0.51
FORBIDDEN KNOWLEDGE	16	2.00	0.66
MEANING & MADNESS	20	1.80	0.44
PATHWAYS/SUSTAIN & JUSTICE	23	1.72	0.95
SEX MIND & MASK	14	1.50	0.34
Total	177	1.99	0.83

## *Rubrics for Diversity Goal, Writing and Numeracy*

### The Diversity of the Human Experience

**Note:** In this scoring guide, “diversity” refers to differences in ethnic, religious, and cultural perspectives, class, race, gender, age, sexual orientation and ability.

**Score of 6:** Portfolio creatively and comprehensively demonstrates an understanding of personal, institutional and ideological issues surrounding diversity in a scholarly fashion, using concrete examples. The work reflects an ability to view issues from multiple perspectives, to question what is being taught, and to construct independent meaning and interpretations.

Demonstrates broad awareness of how the self appears from the greater perspective of human experience, questions own views in light of this awareness, and contemplates its implications for life choices in the personal and public spheres.

**Score of 5:** Portfolio presents persuasive arguments about, and insights into, prominent issues surrounding diversity, and discusses ways in which personal and cultural experiences influence lives, ideas, and events.

Reflects on personal experiences within the broader context of human experience, demonstrating a sophisticated awareness of the limitations of subjective experience and an informed view of the role difference plays in societies and institutions.

**Score of 4:** Portfolio analyzes some issue(s) surrounding diversity, and demonstrates an ability to understand particular situations in the context of current concepts and theory.

Discusses personal experience within the broader context of human experience, demonstrating a working knowledge of features of diverse peoples, societies and institutions, and analyzes these features in some way.

**Score of 3:** Portfolio demonstrates a basic working knowledge of central theories and concepts related to the study of diversity.

Demonstrates some attempt to meaningfully locate oneself within the broader context of diverse culture.

**Score of 2:** Portfolio demonstrates a basic comprehension of some issues surrounding diversity, but refers only in a limited way to current theory and concepts.

Relates personal experiences within the context of broader human experiences, but does not locate self within that context in a thoughtful manner.

**Score of 1:** Portfolio uses some terminology surrounding diversity, but fails to demonstrate meaningful comprehension of key concepts.

Tells of personal experiences but does not connect, compare or contrast those with the experiences of others.

### Writing Rubric

**Score of 6:** The student portfolio demonstrates the ability to communicate clearly for a variety of purposes and diverse audiences. The portfolio shows the mark of the writer’s own labor, critical judgment, and rhetorical shaping. It is marked by lucid and orderly thinking, substantial depth, fullness and complexity of thought. It articulates metacognition on the writer’s part: analysis of learning strategies, revision techniques and improvement in writing skills. It evidences control of diction, syntactic variety, and usage.

**Score of 5:** The student portfolio reveals the ability to communicate for a variety of purposes and diverse audiences. The portfolio satisfactorily shows the mark of the writer's own labor, critical judgment, and rhetorical shaping. The main ideas are well supported with a fair degree of specificity. Organization reveals clarity of thought and paragraphs are coherent units. The writing is largely free of errors in mechanics, usage and sentence structure.

**Score of 4:** The portfolio does come to terms with the basic tasks of the assignments, but overall it executes the assignments less completely or less systematically than a 6 or 5 portfolio does. There is no serious weakness in organization. Though there may be some discourse. Generalizations are usually supported though some detail may be lacking or irrelevant. The portfolio contains some errors in sentence structure and mechanics but not to the point of distracting the reader from the content.

**Score of 3:** The student portfolio shows difficulty in managing the tasks of the assignment. There is likely to be either a weakness in analytical thinking or lack of development of key ideas. The portfolio marginally demonstrates the ability to communicate for a variety of purposes. Errors in sentence structure, usage, and mechanics do interfere with readability. Overall the portfolio shows some metacognition on the student's part, but there is a lack of clarity and depth about revising and the writing process.

**Score of 2:** The portfolio does not come to terms with the assignment. There is little development of ideas, and the reader finds it difficult to follow from one point to the next. Writing tasks may be ignored or badly mishandled. There may be serious errors in reasoning. There are serious and frequent errors in sentence structure, usage, and mechanics. Overall, the portfolio reveals an inability to communicate successfully.

**Score of 1:** The portfolio reveals a combination of rhetorical problems from conceptual confusion, disorganization, and a basic inability to handle language.

#### The Quantitative Literacy Rubric

**Score of 6:** Portfolio demonstrates evidence of ability to conduct independent research and to integrate the results with other methodologies in original work. The meaning of statistical significance, calculus, a comprehensive understanding of causality and correlation, applications of normal curves and outliers to physical and social phenomena, and an integrated comprehension of linear regression is comprehensively displayed.

**Score of 5:** Portfolio demonstrates evidence of ability to conduct independent research and to integrate the results with other methodologies in original work although not to the fullest extent possible. The meaning of statistical significance, a comprehensive understanding of causality and correlation, applications of normal curves and outliers to physical and social phenomena, and an integrated comprehension of linear regression is present but not fully displayed.

**Score of 4:** Portfolio contains assignments demonstrating evidence of an ability to read, understand, and critique books or articles that make use of quantitative reasoning, using descriptive statistics, understanding the meaning of statistical significance, and by displaying data using appropriate graphs and charts. Assignments are included in the portfolio as separate entities and quantitative reasoning is integrated into other work.

**Score of 3:** Portfolio demonstrates evidence of an ability to read, understand, and critique books or articles that make use of quantitative reasoning, using descriptive statistics (mean, median, mode), understanding the meaning of statistical significance, and by displaying data using appropriate graphs and charts. Alternatively, well-designed and appropriate quantitative reasoning assignments are included in the portfolio, but as separate entities.

**Score of 2:** Portfolio demonstrates evidence of limited ability to define, duplicate, label, list, recognize and reproduce mathematical and statistical elements. Portfolio displays limited or no evidence of meaningful application of these numerical concepts.

**Score of 1:** Portfolio demonstrates no evidence of ability to evaluate mathematics and statistics, including no knowledge of basic descriptive statistics.

### *Summary*

Overall the end-of-term course evaluations for the academic year 2004-2005 experienced statistically significant decreases when all items are compared to fall and winter. However, the course evaluations show an increase that was significant in most items in the spring. Items that showed growth in spring are as follows:

UNST Goals:

Critical thinking  
Acquire skills in working with others.  
Explore issues of diversity.  
Develop writing skills.  
Learn to analyze and critically evaluate ideas.  
Explore ethical issues.

Faculty:

Display interest in students and learning.  
Form "discussion groups" to facilitate learning.  
Ask students to share ideas with others.  
Use variety of methods to evaluate student progress.

Mentor:

Displayed a personal interest in students and their learning.  
Made it clear how mentor session work fits into the course.  
Related course material to real life situations.  
Inspired students to set challenging goals.  
Asked students to share ideas with others.  
Encouraged interaction outside of class.  
Help students complete assignments successfully.  
Help students feel more comfortable at PSU.  
Helped students improve their academic skills.

Items on the course evaluations that decreased in spring term are as follows:

Faculty:

Make clear how topics fit into course.  
Explain course material clearly and concisely.  
Inspire students to set challenging goals.  
Provide timely and frequent feedback.  
I understand how course fits into PSU requirements.

Course evaluations primarily correlated with a decrease in the making it clear how topics fit into course, explaining course material clearly and concisely, inspiring students to set challenging goals, providing timely and frequent feedback to students, and showing students how the course fits into PSU requirements.

The end-of-year portfolio review showed a statistically significant increase in the assessment of Quantitative Literacy when compared to the preceding time it was assessed, which was 2003. The Writing rubric also was assessed but showed no significant differences compared to 2003. Lastly, the Diversity Rubric showed a statistically significant difference when compared to 2004. On average inter-rater agreement between the first and second reads was approximately 85%.

*Key recommendations for Fring:*

1. Revisit the Quantitative Literacy and Diversity Rubrics. Although Quantitative Literacy increased compared to prior years, faculty that spoke with the curriculum development associate mentioned that it is very difficult to give students higher scores than a 2 because expectations are not realistic. For example, in order for an English major to score the highest score at any point in the undergraduate career he or she would need to take 400-500 level statistics courses, which is very unlikely. Hence, it appears that the Quantitative Literacy rubric appears to equate with statistical literacy.
2. Have faculty development sessions led by faculty, the fringe coordinator, and the associate for curriculum development and assessment on course evaluation items that need improving. This discussion should not have any punitive nature but instead be of a formative nature. Reward faculty who lead such discussions with stipends. Topics that could be addressed are as follows:
  - Make clear how topics fit into course.
  - Explain course material clearly and concisely.
  - Inspire students to set challenging goals.
  - Provide timely and frequent feedback.
  - I understand how course fits into PSU requirements.

## Sophomore Inquiry Assessment Report

The assessment of Sophomore Inquiry/Clusters during this period should be understood in light of ongoing discussions about reconfiguring this part of University Studies. Prior to fall 2004 the University Studies Committee had begun planning such changes. However, following the release of a white paper by Acting-Provost Michael Reardon's in fall 2004 there was considerable uncertainty as to what would be asked of those managing University Studies and the University Studies Committee's plans were put on hold. It was not clear what curricular reforms might be suggested and how those reforms would affect faculty. The assessment focus during this period has been two-fold: First, we have continued to use the end-of-term assessment instrument to gauge student judgment of our success in teaching to the UNST goals as well as the performance of faculty and mentors. Second, we administered three key surveys, one that ascertained SING faculty views of the mentor program and faculty development needs, and two (a pilot study and a full survey) that asked students to comment on cluster courses.

**End-of-Term Assessment:** The primary mechanism for tracking student evaluation of Sophomore Inquiry remains the end-of-term assessment of UNST goals as well as faculty and mentor performance. Analysis of fall 2004 data showed a statistically significant increase in the items assessed compared to fall 2003. It is not clear what explains this increase. Scores remained stable through AY 2004-2005 and AY 2005-2006. Items that consistently rank below 60% are "develop speaking skills," "learn to use resources for solving problems," and "[Faculty] inspire students to set challenging goals." All other items typically score in the 70% to 80% range.

**Survey of Sophomore Inquiry Faculty:** During spring 2005 more than 100 faculty who had taught SING during the preceding three years were surveyed. Fifty-eight faculty responded. Many sorts of questions were asked, several of which related to faculty development. We learned that 36% were interested in training in active learning pedagogies and 29% in developing assignments that facilitate learning relative to UNST goals. Resources permitting we plan to offer workshops with these emphases.

**Survey of Students Who Have Taken Cluster Courses:** During the 2004 winter and spring terms we surveyed a sample of 163 students who were in Senior Capstones and who had completed their junior cluster courses as their experience in those courses. As the data below indicate, the majority of students reported that the four University Studies goals were a key aspect ("very much" or "quite a bit") of their courses. A majority of the students also reported that the cluster courses they took added breadth to the cluster theme, contributed to interdisciplinarity, and made connections to other courses in the cluster.

**Cluster course assessment from a sample of 163 students in Senior Capstones (winter and spring, 2004)**

<b>University Studies Goals</b>	<b>Very much</b>	<b>Quite a bit</b>	<b>Some</b>	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>Don't remember</b>
Inquiry and Critical Thinking	41.3%	31.5%	19.6%	5.4%	2.2%
Communications	29.9%	30.4%	25.8%	11.8%	2.1%
Diversity of Human Experience	42.6%	24.9%	21.7%	7.5%	3.3%
Ethical Issues and Social Responsibility	39.8%	25.5%	21.6%	10.7%	2.4%

<b>Please rate the degree to which the class(es)</b>	<b>Very much</b>	<b>Quite a bit</b>	<b>Some</b>	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>Don't remember</b>	<b>Not Applicable: this course not applicable to my cluster</b>
Added breadth to knowledge on cluster theme	34.6%	26.7%	15.6%	6.8%	1.5%	14.8%
Contributed to interdisciplinary nature of the cluster	29.9%	26.4%	19.5%	8.1%	1.5%	14.6%
Made connections to other courses in the cluster (including SING)	30.5%	21.4%	19.4%	10.0%	1.8%	16.9%

Of the 163 students, 21 had taken FRINQ, SING and cluster; 34 had taken SING and cluster; 107 had taken cluster only. One student had taken FRINQ and cluster.

## Capstone Assessment Report

The primary goals of the Capstone Office in 04-05 were to: 1) continue to collect data on the pedagogy of Capstones through our course evaluations, 2) document the learning experiences of students from the quantitative section of the Capstone course evaluation data, 3) analyze the students' qualitative comments from the end of term evaluations in order to improve future Capstones and 4) to complete a unique study on the reflective essays of Capstone students. The purpose of all four assessments was to document the type of teaching that takes place in Capstones, begin to understand the impact that this form of pedagogy has on students, and to use the data to improve the Capstone program.

### I. End-of-Term Course Evaluations

#### Capstone Post Course Design Results

<b>Capstone - "Post" Student Surveys</b>	<b>04-05</b>	<b>03-04</b>
	<b>n =</b>	<b>n =</b>
	<b>1777</b>	<b>1732</b>
<b>Course Design Questions: Within your Capstone, what forms of Learning did the instructor use?</b>		
Reflective Journals	73%	70%
Required Class Attendance	77%	74%
Collaborative Projects	72%	79%
Readings on Racial and Ethnic Issues	52%	42%
Extensive Lecturing	31%	21%
Readings on Women and Gender Issues	38%	29%
Group Decision Making	68%	79%
Readings on Civic Responsibility	40%	38%
Student Presentations	74%	77%
Discussions on Local Political Issues	39%	36%
Written Essays/Papers	85%	74%
Discussions on Local Social Issues	60%	56%
Multiple Choice Exams	18%	3%

The course design section of the course evaluation continues to show us that Capstone courses engage students in reflective writing both in journals, essays, and papers. Students also report engaging in student presentations. Clearly faculty are addressing the communication goal in Capstone courses. There seems to be some interesting findings on readings related to diversity issues. Although readings on women and gender have increased by 10% there is an equal 10% decrease in readings on racial and social issues. The program will want to continue to track those elements to see if there are any patterns that arise in readings in Capstone courses.

#### Capstone Post Student Surveys Learning Experiences Results

<b>Capstone - "Post" Student Surveys</b>	<b>2004-2005</b>	<b>2003-2004</b>
	<b>n =</b>	<b>n =</b>
	<b>1777</b>	<b>1732</b>



**Learning Experiences: Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements.**

	Mean	Mean
The community work I did helped me to better understand the readings and lectures in this course.	3.95*	3.74
I feel that the community work I did through this course benefited the community.	4.18*	4.06
I felt a personal responsibility to meet the needs of the community partner of this course.	4.19*	4.06
I was already volunteering in the community before taking this course.	3.06	2.99
The community work involved in this course made me more aware of my own biases/prejudices.	3.59	3.45
My participation in this Capstone helped me to connect what I learned to real life situations.	4.01*	3.79
I will continue to volunteer or participate in the community after this course.	3.82	3.75
The community work and connection to the community were reflected in the syllabus.	3.73	4.01
The community work in this course assisted me in clarifying my career goals.	3.76	3.33
I believe this course deepened my understanding of local political issues.	3.46*	3.32
I believe this course deepened my understanding of local social issues.	3.86*	3.82
I now have a better understanding of how to make a difference in my community.	3.90*	3.78

\* p < .05, when compared to 2003-2004 statistically significant *increase*

\*\* p < .05 when compared to 2003-2004 statistically significant *decrease*

The data from the learning experiences portion of the Capstone course evaluation showed that Capstone students reported an increase feeling that their Capstone benefited the community and that they felt a responsibility to meet the need of the community partner. Since one of the goals of University Studies is to foster a sense of social responsibility, these data show that the Capstone courses are indeed addressing this student learning objective. In addition, students reported an increased sense of relevancy as they responded that Capstones help them connect their learning to real life situations and that they now have a better understanding of how to make a difference in their community. It is interesting to note that although only 39% of students reported specific readings on political issues in the course design questions, the mean score for deepening their understanding of political issues increased significantly. This is certainly a trend the Capstone Office would hope to foster in ongoing faculty development.

Qualitative Comments from the Capstone Course Evaluation

In addition to the quantitative data, the Capstone course evaluation also provides University Studies with qualitative data about Capstone courses. The course evaluation asks students to answer two questions: *What stands out as your most important learning in this Capstone and are there elements of this course design you would change and why?*

Two-hundred comments of each question were selected. Sample selection was conducted using a simple random selection approach. Then the comments were analyzed by two independent readers. The readers analyzed the data separately, created themes and then categorized the comments by the themes. The table below list the themes generated by the two readers.

*Question One: Most Important Learning*

Reader One	Reader Two
Importance of community service to serve (including self-efficacy that they could make a	Social responsibility/Service (56)

difference) (53)	
Effective communication strategies especially in the area of working with groups (27)	Project/Group/Communication (26)
Enhanced appreciation of diverse populations (17)	Diversity (19)
Career (16)	Career Development (17)
Connection with faculty member (15)	Instructor (11)
Specific exercises in the classroom (18)	Classroom Activities (21)
Hands on learning-relevancy of learning (24)	Learning from community agency (15)
No response-blank (12)	No response (12)
Self awareness from direct service with others (18)	Personal growth (15)

Both readers agreed on the top nine themes in the data although they named these themes slightly differently. They both determined that the most common responses related to the importance of service (frequently referred to as the University Studies goal of **social responsibility**). Students consistently made comments such as “I understand the importance of community involvement to at risk youth and homeless families”. Other students remarked on the importance of the relationships that they developed through community involvement. As one student stated “it was important to be there in order to strengthen and build the relationships between the students and me and to show that we care about them”.

The second most frequent response related to **improved communication skills**. Frequently this was placed in the context of learning how to work effectively with their peer group in order to complete their Capstone project. Students commented on the importance of “teamwork,” “how to come to consensus and work in a group”, and learning to “overcome fears and take charge of a group”. Next students commented on becoming more aware of **diversity** issues both within themselves and within the community. One student reported, “being forced to look at my own beliefs and having someone point out the prejudices I have that I was not aware of” and another stated, “I am more aware of diversity in my community and not being afraid of it.”

Furthermore, students reported gaining practical **career development**. For some students it was learning that they enjoyed a particular field (like teaching), for others it was gaining technology skills, and for others it was learning a professional skill such as grant writing. Students also reported **personal growth** as they referred to reflective practices making them more aware of “my own evolution” and enhancing their “confidence” in the world.

Finally students documented processes that helped them learn such as **interaction with the community agencies**, positive **relationship with their faculty** and **classroom activities** that they found important to their learning. Students documented that the hands-on learning at the agencies was critical to their learning. In addition, the process of linking the theories to actual practices was a key component of their learning. They also found the relationships with their faculty and peers to be essential. They commented on the class size (seminar style), the class discussions, and the connection to their faculty member.

Question Two: What would you change about this course?

Reader One	Reader Two
Nothing (69)	Nothing (69)
No response (21) (corrected from 14)	No response (21)
Suggestions for improving faculty teaching (including more structure) (23)	Change Classroom Activities (14) More organization /Structure (12)
Increased contact and communication with community partner (16)	Improve community partnership (7) More time in the community (7)
Issues of TIME (amount of time to do project)	Improve class project (11)

19	Lighten overall workload (7)
Less than 5 students (but more than 1) stated the following: location of course, scheduling of course, conflict with teams, critique of UNST, need money for S &S	

The two readers both noted that out of the 200 evaluations, 80 of them had **no suggestions for changes**. This was by far the most common response and it occurred about four times more frequently than any concrete suggestion. The main concerns of students dealt with having **more structure** and organization to the Capstone. Students requested greater organization, more guidelines, and specific details related to their projects. They also suggested that a few faculty could improve their **communication with the community partner**. Sometimes students were uncomfortable with the lack of specificity that the faculty and community partner had in regards to the final product. In addition, they expressed a concern with the amount of **time** they needed to spend on their Capstone projects. Although some (7) wanted increased time at the community partner site, more students were concerned with the overall time they needed to spend doing the reading, reflections, group work, and completing the final project.

## II. Work Sample Analysis

The two researchers followed the agreed upon data analysis protocol (Creswell, 1994). Each reader identified 6 themes although no specified number of themes was determined in advance. The researchers then spent several hours reviewing and describing their findings. They found substantial congruence between their two analyses as they described the student outcomes found in the reflection papers. A comparison of the themes they found is listed in the table below:

Comparison Themes for Written Reflections

Reader One	Reader Two
<p><b>COMMUNICATION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• spoke to group and class dynamics as communication lesson</li> <li>• reflection papers</li> <li>• increase in speaking ability/"coming out of shell"</li> <li>• "communicate more effectively with myself"</li> <li>• skill: using "I/me statements"</li> <li>• thoughtful/grateful listening</li> <li>• discussions as open-forum reflection</li> </ul>	<p>COMMUNICATION</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Group process-working in teams</li> <li>b) Effective communication with specific audiences (children, age appropriate)</li> <li>c) Confidence in Public Speaking to multiple audiences ("real audiences", community partner, clients)</li> <li>d) Listening</li> <li>e) Communication "in- class" and "in-community"</li> <li>f) Saw as transferable to professional life</li> <li>g) Reflection process enhanced communication</li> </ol>
<p><b>CRITICAL THINKING</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigative work (research projects)</li> <li>• Being an active participant requires critical thinking (class discussions)</li> <li>• "fears and costs" of service work (included analysis of community interactions here, also included examination of social issues here)</li> </ul>	<p>CRITICAL THINKING</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Research on social/environ. issues</li> <li>b) Personal analysis/deconstruction of fears and assumptions</li> <li>c) In class discussions were given as examples of times when students engaged in CT.</li> <li>d) Reexamination of social issues: rethink ideas about homelessness</li> <li>e) Critical analysis of specific interactions during the Capstone and the "meaning it held."</li> </ol>
<p><b>DIVERSITY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-class sharing of personal story contributed to</li> </ul>	<p>DIVERSITY</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Modeling of appreciation of diversity in class</li> <li>b) Discovery of one's own "privilege"</li> </ol>

<p>classroom diversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• class participants is diverse</li> <li>• Community service interaction contains diverse populations (agreed recognition of privilege happened here)</li> <li>• group work as diversity (appreciation for diverse view points)</li> <li>• Addressed stereotypes (include lessons learned about diverse populations here)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c) Classroom diversity (ideas, communication styles, gifts/strengths)</li> <li>d) Interaction with diverse populations in the community</li> <li>e) Fears associated with diversity</li> <li>f) Developed respect for diverse view points</li> <li>g) Learned new facts about diverse populations</li> </ul>
<p><b>SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND ETHICS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• hands-on application with community partner</li> <li>• Examination of “value laden” language (included examination of personal ethics and community partners ethics here)</li> <li>• Social responsibility to diverse kids and diverse populations(included the comments re: future acts of service, and role modeling)</li> <li>• voting</li> <li>• career</li> </ul>	<p><b>SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND ETHICS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Examination of personal ethics and ethics of community partner</li> <li><u>b) Practice social responsibility in service to the community partner</u></li> <li>c) Responsibility to vote and be aware of issues</li> <li>d) Commitment to future acts of service</li> <li>e) Realize need courage to take risks of social responsibility</li> <li>f) considering careers that promote the common good</li> <li>g) Roles models of social responsible people</li> </ul>
<p><i>CONSTRUCTED LEARNING</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pulling in previous University Studies work (FRINQ, SINQ)</li> <li>• personal interaction with others enhanced learning in each of the UNST goals (new insights re: diversity)</li> <li>• connected knowledge from field of study/major as part of community in the course incorporating past educational journey/experience the community work was the most important part of this course development of leadership style/skills</li> <li>• taking lessons outside of class (sharing lessons with a friend or family member)</li> <li>• goals related to each other, saw discussions (communication) as tool for critical thinking</li> </ul>	<p><i>INTEGRATED LEARNING</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) students saw goals as connected to each other—hard to talk about one without connecting it to the other</li> <li>b) would clearly demonstrate critical thinking skills when deconstructing stereotypes (appreciation of diversity)</li> <li>c) would acknowledge enhanced communication (with others outside of class) because of new insights re: communication and diversity</li> <li>d) connected Capstone experience to prior learning</li> <li>e)</li> </ul>
<p><b>“TEACHING AND LEARNING IUSSES”</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective to connect text to service</li> <li>• Telling of personal interactions as example of important learning (in reflections)</li> <li>• increase in self-knowledge/personal growth through interaction with community partners</li> <li>• career growth (via interaction with community partner—real world)</li> <li>• application of critical theories and practice</li> <li>• incorporating past educational journey/experience the community work was the most important part of this course development of leadership style/skills</li> <li>• Relationship with faculty was important (many saw them as role models)</li> </ul>	<p><i>PEDAGOGY</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Clear expectations for the course enhance student experience</li> <li>b) Clear connection between the text and the service is beneficial</li> <li>c) Courses (and faculty) which modeled “respect” enhanced students’ appreciation for diversity.</li> <li>d) Collaborative learning was a powerful experience for students-lead to personal growth</li> <li>e) Positive relationship with the faculty enhanced students learning and their commitment to the project.</li> <li>f) Students saw “real world” applications</li> <li>g) Direct service Capstones provided students with meaningful relationship with community members</li> </ul>

	which created powerful learning context h) Career development i) Apply academic material (text) to practice
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The researchers clearly agreed on the six major themes found and even named four of the six themes identical terms (probably because they were familiar with the terms commonly used in the general education program --communication, critical thinking, diversity, and social responsibility). In addition to these four student outcomes, students also described two themes not anticipated. They described how these distinct student outcomes were also related and intertwined with each other. They described an experience of integrated learning as they saw that critical thinking helped them to both appreciate diversity more deeply and to communicate more effectively. They saw a relationship between deconstructing stereotypes and a social responsibility to serve diverse communities. In addition, students described the pedagogy they observed which brought about these outcomes. Of course students did not use the term pedagogy, but they described the learning environment and the assignments that furthered their understanding of communication, critical thinking, diversity, and social responsibility.

In University Studies, the Communication goal explains that “students will enhance their capacity to communicate in various ways—writing, graphics, numeracy, and other visual and oral means—to collaborate effectively with others in group work, and to be competent in appropriate communication technologies” (<http://www.unst.pdx.edu>). In their final Capstone reflections, students mainly spoke to their increased ability to communicate with others – in group settings as well as interpersonally – noting that this skill can be utilized in a variety of contexts in their future endeavors.

For example, in one reflection, a student wrote about his/her experience communicating in their team:

“Since working in teams is almost unavoidable in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, I thought it would be important to improve my understanding of work within teams....I learned that communication can make or break a team experience. It was amazing to see how a positive change in how our group members communicated made the whole process of working on our project easier and more effective.” (#6)

On an interpersonal level, one student wrote about how his communication skills changed and how he was able to see the practical application of these newly-acquired skills:

“This class for me has been a communication savior. It has helped me realize that what I have to share is important and people are interested. I noticed a change in my other classes too where I began to speak up more. Everyday [sic] I go and volunteer at the club I feel the same way. When I say something to the kids they listened. It’s good to know that I am able to communicate things clearly.” (#32)

One Capstone instructor uses the language of “grateful listening” as a communication exercise. One of her students explains:

“Lately, when I want to get an idea or point across to someone who is not familiar with grateful listening, I will tell them that I do not want them to respond and ask them to just listen without thinking of any reply. Whether they are or not, it at least appears to me that these individuals are paying more attention to what I have to say, at least I feel listened to.” (#19)

She takes it to the next level in her application of these skills outside the classroom and into her chosen place of service, creating links between her classroom learning and her service learning:

“Improved communication skills and grateful listening techniques have proven invaluable to me during my time at Rose Haven. Hearing what the women at Rose Haven have to say, without forming any judgment or making any comment has been a wonderful experience for me.” (#19)

Another student, in her reflection about work at a woman’s shelter wrote about silence as an effective communication tool. In her reflection, not only does she speak of listening to others about their

experiences, but about why she believes speaking gives her power and acknowledgement. Her struggle to understand the idea behind “grateful listening” offers us an opportunity to understand how personal interaction – even with near-strangers – can affect one on a deeper level.

“What are my words? I use them not just as placards to advertise what I know, but also as searching arrows I throw from my mouth, trying to hit targets of truth. I guess I’m thinking I’ve hit a particular target when the sound echoes back pleasantly in my own ears, or if someone else compliments my aim by way of their agreement. But lately my arrows have been bouncing and ricocheting a bit too often for my comfort, and others had started to find me to be an equally deflective surface. I understand this to be what happens as people get closers. But now and then the women at Rose Haven grab me, metaphorically, unintentionally, and they say ‘Don’t shoot.’” (#25)

In conclusion, students wrote about the importance of communication and how their communication – and their interpretation of communication – was changed or was enhanced. They reported that they better understood how to more effectively communicate. On the flip side, they also reported how ineffective communication can often lead to bad team experiences or more difficulty in situations.

Critical thinking is a catchphrase that has been discussed in recent educational literature and in classroom settings (Brookfield, 1987, 1991, 1997; Ennis, 1984). At Portland State University, the University Studies department notes that the objective of critical thinking is that “students will learn various modes of inquiry through interdisciplinary curricula—problem-posing, investigating, conceptualizing—in order to become active, self-motivated, and empowered learners” (<http://www.pdx.edu/unst>). Critical thinking is approached differently in various capstone courses. For example, in some of Portland State University’s direct service capstones, students are able to apply the concept of critical thinking through interaction with the community that they are serving.

For instance, in one capstone course, which is entitled “Science in the Outdoor Classroom,” the instructor challenges his students to find ways to encourage youth to explore their surroundings in a critically challenging way. One student described her experience:

“Now that I have been challenged to think more critically, to think more “outside of the box”, I can see so many more possibilities within our school systems, schools, classes, and teachers, in regards to teaching styles and teaching tools. Since I have left lower level public schools and have now spent 4 years in college, I have experienced that there is much to be said for autonomy in the classroom, asking and answering my own questions, as well as being inspired by my classes and teachers.... The idea of science inquiry was amazing to me; guiding the students to teach themselves, to ask their own questions, to find their own answers, have a good time, and to think freely and creatively is brilliant. I have seen the different groups of kids, over the course of the days we would spend together; be inspired to learn, have a good time while doing it, and obtain knowledge.” (#31)

Similarly, another student speaks to her experiences with critical thinking both as a way to influence her teaching, but also to influence her students’ ways of learning and assist them in their explorations of their own educational approaches.

“Our role as capstone students in this program was to guide the children in the field and help them formulate questions about their observations. The development of critical thinking skills in young minds is imperative to their success in upper division education and Wolfree provides a great outlet for honing these skills. The adult mentors and capstone students help the children be attentive through the use of deer ears, owl eyes, and the fox walk so that they may observe the forest in a more undisturbed state and become aware of their surroundings. This results in the viewing of wildlife, waterfowl, aquatic bugs and all the other sights and sounds of the forest. From their observations, the children begin to question why things are as they are and how they could go about measuring and recording their observations to answer their questions.” (#3)

In many ways, critical thinking can be thought of as a process that we use to inquire about topics outside of oneself – that we are exploring ideas and concepts that are impersonal. However, as shown in

the next example, critical thinking helped this student empower himself not only about the goals of his service work, but also his own personal goals. In his reflection about his work with a local Boys and Girls Club, this student wrote about the “fears and costs” of mentoring:

“One of my fears was that there would be times that I did not want to go [to] the club but felt rather that I had to. I feared that if I went to the club with an attitude of not wanting to be there I could not be effective as a mentor. This was tested throughout my time at the club. Fortunately, every time I went to the club I went with an attitude of wanting to be there. Most of the time I really anticipated going to the club and I looked forward to seeing some of the kids that I had been working with.” (#29)

He further explains, in a personal way, that inquiry and critical thinking influenced his interaction at the Boys and Girls Club, but also started the process of critically thinking about his personal goals for himself.

“I think inquiry and critical thinking can be carried on to the rest of my life. It will really help me to sit down and reflect on my pursuits and ask myself questions such as those mentioned in the syllabus. What qualities will I need to be successful in my career, in my relationships, in life? How will I access those qualities? What do I need to sustain those qualities? What will be the costs? If I make conscious efforts to ask myself these questions before my endeavors, I think I will be given a clearer picture of how to attain what I want in life. Asking these questions before I began mentoring helped me become the type of mentor I wanted to be. I didn’t go into the experience blind; I prepared myself by giving this mentorship lots of forethought.” (#29)

In summary, students reported that they were most able to understand critical thinking when they were able to put it into the context of their work with their service location. Practical application partnered with reflective practice offered many students the opportunity to critically think about work with different populations as well as personal ideals and beliefs.

The third University Studies goal – The Diversity of Human Experience – is that “students will enhance their appreciation for and understanding of the rich complexity of the human experience through the study of differences in ethnic and cultural perspectives, class, race, gender, sexual orientation, and ability” (<http://www.unst.pdx.edu>). In this sample, students reported deep learning in the area of appreciation of diversity. This theme was reflected in students’ profound comments about how appreciation of diversity was modeled for them both in the classroom and in the community. They saw faculty modeling respect for diverse viewpoints and agency representatives serving as advocates for diverse populations. In addition, students wrote in their essays how they learned to appreciate diverse viewpoints through their community of peers in the classroom. They discussed how they learned to appreciate different ideas, communication styles, strengths, and opinions of their peers.

Students furthered their appreciation of diversity by meaningful self- reflection recognizing their own lack of exposure to diverse populations. Many of them realized that the world is much more diverse than their neighborhood of origin. As one student commented,

“I grew up in Milwaukie, which has a very white homogenous population. In school most of my friends were exactly like me: white, middle-lower class, blue collar families...My experience in this class has also made me more accepting towards one group with which I have had literally no experience: homeless”. (# 11)

Furthermore, students discussed deepening their appreciation of diversity through interactions with different populations. Many of them talked about their original fear of engaging with new populations, but through the Capstone they were able to address those fears and form deep connections with others. Furthermore, students became more aware and sensitive to the diversity of social class, which they reported not reflecting deeply upon until they encountered social class issues in their Capstone. Capstone students reported that they assumed that the children they worked with in the community were being raised in a similar economic situation as they were raised. Notions of homelessness, alternative living conditions, and varied family structures just had not occurred to them. As one student who was working with children stated,

“We thought we had come up with questions that were broad enough as to not alienate some students. The question asked ‘what color is your house?’ This caused one girl to sulk and say ‘I don’t live in a house, I live in an apartment’...I learned...each student comes from a different family structure and different ethnic and racial background and that can make quite a difference to a child” (#41)

Finally students commented on how the Capstone taught them the dangers of reinforcing stereotypes. Students reported a heightened awareness of when they were making generalizations, and spoke about trying to reduce that tendency in order to more fully know an individual rather than relying on the stereotype to form their opinions about people they encountered. Additionally, students reported gaining information about the lived-experience of diverse populations and simultaneously discovering their own privilege in the process. They became aware of their own privilege in contrast to the new information they learned about specific populations who are marginalized from certain benefits in our society. As one student remarked,

“the central theme in this novel that stood out to me and made me think was the idea that illegal immigrants really had no alternatives. They had no place to go in an emergency situation for basic necessities of food, clothing, and medical attention. That the privilege that I have been accustomed to of never having to worry about food or shelter is not a reality for all, that it is not even a reality of all Americans.” (#15).

Students reported that this awareness of privilege is not an easy process for many of them. This may cause them to challenge beliefs they have held about themselves, about people different from them, about how our society is structured, and who benefits from the established structures. As one Capstone student stated,

“It was something that had been hard for me to acknowledge; I had an advantage over some people, I had an advantage over John (a homeless man). It was something I had not realized for most of my life. It was my family that gave me my advantage. As simple as it might sound it was one important component that was missing in many of the lives of people that were homeless. The problem of homelessness is too complex to say that it is the most important..., but this was a step in the direction to begin to understand the problem.” (#30)

Another student deconstructed her value judgments about social class as she interacted with women in a homeless shelter. She learned how to take down her guard to actually come to know people in a different social class and through the process transformed her previously held beliefs about herself in relationship to others

“Although I didn’t know it at first, my motivation for working with homeless women was to do something good for people “less fortunate”. The problem with this motivation was the presumption that I was better than the women at Rose Haven because I am in college and have more money than they do. However, once I started volunteering there, I noticed that those women did not share my viewpoint”...further experiences at Rose Haven led me to challenge my false sense of superiority.” (#5)

In summary, students reported deepening their appreciation of diversity. They reported being exposed to new populations including new cultures, youth, elderly, homeless, and immigrants. Students moved beyond mere exposure to new populations and reporting making deep connections to those they worked with in the community. Students became friends with some, colleagues to others, and advocates for others. They came to understand the complexity of lives of diverse populations and found themselves developing new perspectives on social issues, social policies, and deconstructing old stereotypes. Ultimately, students reported being transformed in ways they had not previously encountered in their life or in their education.

The fourth University Studies goal – Ethics and Social Responsibility explains that “students will expand their understanding of the impact and value of individuals and their choices on society, both intellectually and socially, through group projects and collaboration in learning communities”



(<http://www.unst.pdx.edu>). Students reported that the Capstone provided them with the opportunity to deepen their sense of social responsibility and reflect upon ethical issues in the community. Many students reported practicing social responsibility in service to the community partner, while others discussed the ethical value of voting. Students also reported developing a commitment to social responsibility by serving their community in the future. They reported their plans to continue volunteering or committed to serve as an advocate in a new setting. Some even spoke about the desire to participate in careers that would promote this notion of social responsibility while serving their community. Finally, students poignantly discussed the power of role models they had learned from in their Capstone. They learned that social responsibility took real commitment and courage to carry out in the community.

Many students suggested that they deepened their commitment to social responsibility as a result of acknowledging their privilege. As they recognized that they had benefited in the structure of our society, they came to believe that it was their responsibility to give back to the community. Through the Capstone, many students had been exposed to people who had unequal access to education, safe housing, food, money, and employment, and as a result these students developed a commitment to contribute to their community in hopes of building a more compassionate and just society. As one male stated,

“As a child and a young man I would not have believed that being male and white was of any importance, but I know differently now. When I look at all the advantages I have had over the years I see how these advantages have contributed to my success. As a successful person, as a person that has a home, I begin to comprehend my responsibility in contributing to a society that has provided me a wonderful life. A life that more than half the world’s people would never dream possible” (# 30)

Students also discussed political and educational issues in the context of social responsibility in their Capstones. Many came to understand the importance of political and social issues such as school funding especially if their Capstones were directly related to youth or k-12 education. They developed a perspective that voting was the social responsibility of citizens and that passing school funding measures was critical to the success of a community. As one student stated,

“Most people voted to no more tax increases clearly didn’t understand the negative impact to our schools and to the public services. What does it say about our value system when people vote against the schools that education their kids?...A good public education is the basis for a healthy community that attracts big business. Without a skilled labor force, companies like Intel will pack up and leave” (#8)

Finally, students reported learning that social responsibility takes courage and conviction. Some could see that at the community sites where they were working, some heard it in the guest speakers who talked about their engagement in the community, and some found it in the texts used in Capstones. One student referred to a character in the Capstone reading that helped her see that social responsibility takes courage and action. She reported that,

“ The most interesting character to me was a man that believed in equal rights for blacks, and had the means to help them, but never had the courage to stand up to them. It made me realize that equity is not achievable by simply believing in it. That nothing is accomplished by simply standing idly and watching the world go by. It takes action and conviction to stand up and work on the issues that matter to you. It made me realize that to be truly socially responsible in fighting for such ethical issues as equal rights that it takes work and active involvement beyond education.” (#15)

In summary students reported deepening their social responsibility in varied ways. For some this was in the form of direct service in the community, which they hoped to continue, for others that was through voting and the political process. Regardless of the means by which students planned to engage with their community, most reported an awareness that they had a responsibility to contribute to the well being of their community. They felt a relationship between themselves and the health of their local schools, their community, and especially the individuals they worked with in the community.

One of the most constant themes in the analysis of the data was how students integrated their learning around the general education learning goals. Students rarely described a goal in isolation, but

rather commented on how one learning goal helped inform another goal area. The most obvious examples occurred in the area of diversity. Students consistently described their learning related to the appreciation of diversity in terms of critical thinking, specifically the process of deconstructing previously held beliefs. As one student described,

“Outside of this Capstone class, I don’t think I could have transformed my ignorant presumption that social class dictates the value of a person. I had to first recognize my desire to dissolve my belief systems that don’t support my spiritual growth. Then by using the tools inquiry/critical thinking while interacting with different people than me, I was able to recognize and challenge a belief that was getting in my way.” (#5)

Here, the student explicitly acknowledges that the transformation of her belief around social class required two aspects of the general education goals. She needed exposure to diversity and she needed critical thinking skills to analyze her belief system. The student claims without the Capstone course, she doubts that she would have been engaged with diverse populations in a way that would simultaneously challenged her assumptions. It appears that the transformations that students experience during Capstones are moments when multiple powerful learning goals are taking place continuously throughout the course, which gives them the opportunity to transform their thinking.

Of the 50 reflection papers that were examined, 44 contained explorations of more than one University Studies goal, although a few of those did not explicitly state that they were writing about more than one University Studies goal. For example, one student chose to write about Critical Thinking. Her definition of critical thinking included using “research, problem solving, organization, and teamwork” to further her skills as a critical thinker. In many instances throughout her paper, she uses communication techniques as vehicles to critical thinking:

“The class discussions also played an important role in shaping the development of my critical thinking skills. I think what made the class discussions so beneficial is that I was presented with differing viewpoints and I was able to take those in, and then respond with my own viewpoints. The class discussions provided an immediate share and respond session, requiring me to gather my thoughts quickly for a response, while at the same time causing me to think about an issue in a different light.” (#4)

For this student, the acquisition of critical thinking skills was most important and communication was a vehicle through which she improved those skills. Additionally, she explained that the weekly reflective papers helped further her skills. Each of these topics, class discussions and weekly written papers, was explored in reference to the Communication goal in other students’ papers.

In conclusion the 50 student reflections described how students were transformed by their courses with respect to communication, critical thinking, social responsibility, and appreciation of diversity. They described the pedagogical features of these courses that supported their learning. Students explained how these courses effectively wove together their learning from text, the classroom, and the community by modeling constructivist teaching practices. They also shared that these courses functioned as learning communities as they attributed deep learning from their collaborative learning with their peers. Finally, students reported that these courses were relevant to their lives as they learned more about themselves, the course content and the society in which they are members.

#### Implications for the 04-05 Assessment Report

Overall, students reported that the Capstone courses indeed address the 4 goals of University Studies. The pedagogy section of the course evaluations confirms the ways student gain skills in communication. The course evaluations confirmed students’ sense of social responsibility both in the qualitative and quantitative section. The student work product analysis confirmed the ways students deepened an appreciation for diversity and furthered their critical thinking skills. Future areas of growth for the Capstone program will be to work individually with Capstone instructors to address some of the

relatively low scores in course design questions related to required readings on diversity issues, political issues, and civic responsibility.

## Mentor Qualitative Responses Report

### Qualitative Analysis of the End of term Open-Ended Question Analysis

The open-ended responses provide further insight into students' reactions to mentor sessions. Results gathered from Transfer Transition courses in Fall 2005 in this analysis. Results of this analysis show that while the responses for Freshman Inquiry, Sophomore Inquiry, and Transfer Transition are similar, the type of assistance that students value is different at each level. For example, the content analysis reveals that freshman students value the personal connections they make in the course most and the sophomore students value the course related assistance most. Not surprisingly the content analysis of the open ended questions for transfer transition students is also different. Transfer transition students value content related assistance, personal connections, and extending learning to be of almost equal value. (Please note that the percentage of responses listed below do not add up to 100% as students typically have multiple answers for each question.)

#### Freshman Inquiry, Fall 2004

Please take a moment to comment on what has been the most helpful to you in the mentor section of the class.

Theme	% of responses	Type of Comment	Example
Personal Connection	65%	Friendship, connection with university, ease of discussion & understanding due to comfort level	<i>"I like the fact that we can all talk openly and that no one is going to get strongly offended. I like the fact that it is a small personal group rather than a huge group. In mentored session you feel free to talk and voice your opinion where as main session you are almost "shushed".</i>
Course Related Assistance	42%	Understanding assignment, course content	<i>... really prepared us for each session of the main class. He really helped us prepare for the work ahead.</i>
Extending Learning	39%	Discussions, application of theory	<i>I like having our own little discussion group; it helps me more when I go to the main session because I can previously talk about some of the issues before hand with some of my other classmates.</i>  <i>Having time in a small group to understand what were reading and talking about in main session actually applied in the real world.</i>
Skill Development	38%	Writing, reading, critical thinking	<i>I've become a better writer. My 7<sup>th</sup> grade teacher would be happy that I've finally stopped using comma splices. Thanks ...!</i>
General Statements	26%	Positive, Negative	<i>...made himself very accessible to get a hold of. He was always there to lend a helping hand and I really appreciate him</i>
No answer or "nothing"	1%		

Please comment on what could have been done to improve your experience in the mentor class

Theme	% of responses	Type of Comment	Example
Structural	45%	More time, less time	<i>sometimes we run out of time; and I think we should have a longer class. maybe a few minutes.</i>
No answer or "nothing"	34%		
Pedagogical style	22%	More structured, less structured	<i>A lot of the activities done during the mentor session seemed a bit abstract and a little childish to be done in college.</i>
General negative	15%		<i>Not so early in the morning</i>

Sophomore Inquiry, Fall 2005

Please take a moment to comment on what has been the most helpful to you in the mentor section of the class.

Theme	% of responses	Type of Comment	Example
Course related assistance	68%	Understanding assignment, course content	<i>...was helpful because she explained issues in class with me and it made it easier for me to understand what was expected of me in my papers.</i>  <i>Thank you for ...; without her I would have been lost</i>
Extending learning	56%	Discussions, application of theory	<i>"I enjoyed looking for and discussion current legislation that related to the class; it was helpful in understanding how everything we were learning related to the real world."</i>
Personal Connections	47%		<i>"I liked the discussions in mentor class affiliated with main class work. it helped to express my opinion more so in a more comfortable setting"</i>
Skill Development	43%		<i>Having personal feedback in smaller groups really helped my understanding of the material and feedback on work I did.</i>
General Statements	22%	Positive, Negative	<i>She is awesome and fun!</i>  <i>Nothing. I do not like mentor session.</i>
No answer or "nothing"	2%		

Please comment on what could have been done to improve your experience in the mentor class

Theme	% of responses	Type of Comment	Example
Structural	40%	More time, less time	<i>The mentor sessions could be</i>

			<i>longer; it seems like as soon as we get into real work it's time to go.</i>
Pedagogical style	32%	More structured, less structured	<i>I think the class could have been a little more focused. It would have been appropriate for the mentor to be more demanding of us; it might have kept the class a bit more productive.</i>
No answer or "nothing"	29%		
General negative comments	10%		<i>I don't think that mentor sessions are very helpful. They are a waste of time. After sitting in main session for 2 and 1/2 hours I don't feel like mentor session is very helpful. It's only 50 minutes and seems to be just a waste of time.</i>

Transfer Transition, Fall 2005  
(Themes listed in order of importance)

Please take a moment to comment on what has been the most helpful to you in the mentor section of the class.

Theme	% of responses	Type of Comment	Example
Course related assistance	73%	Understanding assignment, course content	<i>Mentor session was a big help! It helped me understand the hard topics more from class. It also helped me work on projects and finish homework</i>  <i>I like the one-on-one attention I get. There have been times when I need a lot of help with my homework; and I know I can always count on getting help in my mentor session.</i>
Extending learning	68%	Discussions, application of theory	<i>The mentor was very helpful in the way that she always made her self available to help us. She always tied in real life situations to situations back in the 19th century.</i>
Personal Connections	67%		<i>He really helped me get used to the PSU program and really connected with me as a student. He receives an A+ in my book.</i>
Skill Development	43%		<i>Learning about computer programs was really helpful. I've been afraid of computers until now.</i>
General Statements	22%	Positive, Negative	<i>Our mentor was very helpful. She was great!</i>

No answer or "nothing"	Less than 1%		
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Please comment on what could have been done to improve your experience in the mentor class

Theme	% of responses	Type of Comment	Example
Structural	36%	More time, less time	<i>The mentor session had little connection with class and was often used as free time with attendance. Perhaps more time could be put in towards relating the material  fewer meetings.</i>
Pedagogical style	34%	More structured, less structured	<i>having a more focused goal each session in which the mentor guided the class.</i>
No answer or "nothing"	33%		
General negative comments	14%		<i>I wish that more of my credits would have transferred. I would wish I didn't have to use this time away from my business classes..</i>