

2008

## University Studies Annual Assessment 2007-2008

Portland State University. University Studies Program

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### Citation Details

Portland State University. University Studies Program, "University Studies Annual Assessment 2007-2008" (2008). *University Studies Annual Assessment Reports*. 6.

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## University Studies 2007-2008 Assessment Report

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the 2007-2008 academic year, the University Studies program continued to use existing survey instruments to conduct assessment at the Freshman, Sophomore and Senior levels. Prior Learning, Early-, Mid- and End-of-year Surveys were administered in the year-long Freshman Inquiry courses. End-of-term evaluations were administered in Sophomore Inquiry courses and Capstone Student Experience surveys were administered in Capstone courses. In addition to these survey instruments, student learning related to University Studies goals was assessed through student portfolios at the Freshman-level and a pilot assessment of student work samples conducted at the Sophomore and Capstone levels.

From student responses to the End-of-year, End-of-term and Capstone Student Experience surveys it is clear that University Studies goals are being addressed at all levels of the program. Across all of the surveys, students were asked whether they had opportunities to engage in learning related to University Studies goals. On all but two items, FRINQ students' average agreement rating was 3.9 or higher on a 5-point agreement scale (4 = Agree 5 = Strongly agree). FRINQ students were least likely to agree that they had opportunities to develop skills expressing themselves orally or opportunities to learn how to find and use resources to solve problems. SINQ students were least likely to agree that they had opportunities to develop skills expressing themselves orally or working with others as members of a team. FRINQ and SINQ students agreed that their faculty showed a personal interest in their learning and used a variety of methods to evaluate their performance. Additionally, students agreed that SINQ faculty created an atmosphere that encouraged active student participation.

At the FRINQ level, student portfolios were reviewed using the Critical Thinking and Ethics and Social Responsibility rubrics. The portfolio review suggests that students' learning related to writing and diversity have remained relatively consistent over the last three administrations (2003, 2006, 2008) although both scores fell slightly between 2006 and 2008. In addition to the rubrics, student portfolios were also evaluated using a checklist for each rubric to reflect the types of student work included in the portfolio. That evaluation revealed that most student portfolios include personal narratives and analytical writing, identify their own position and provide evidence related to their positions and identify specific social issues. Student portfolios were less likely to include first drafts of writing assignments or examples of creative writing. These data have been provided to faculty teams representing each of the seven FRINQ themes who will use the data to identify areas of focus for the next academic year.

At the SINQ level, student work samples were reviewed from several pilot courses. The work samples were assessed using the Critical Thinking rubric. The scores clustered between 2 and 3 with several work samples also earning a score of 4. The mean Critical Thinking score for SINQ students was 2.9. Because this was not a random sample of students and only represents a small set of student work from SINQ, these results should not be treated as representative of all SINQ courses. This analysis helped the program to identify the types of papers that are suitable for assessment at this level.

Two qualitative assessment projects were conducted by the Capstone program this year. The first reviewed student comments from early term assessment and student comments from the end-of-term evaluation. Early in the term, students reported that faculty feedback, their experience in the community, classroom discussions and readings were helping them learn. At the end of the term, students indicated that they had gained insight about being involved in their communities, learned to apply theory to practice, enhanced their understanding of themselves, and gained insight about diverse populations. When asked for suggested changes for the course, almost all students said, "nothing." Students who had suggestions focused on course assignments, the time it takes to complete the project, and course readings. The second assessment was an evaluation of student reflections related to Ethics and Social Responsibility. The reflections were scored against the rubric

used for FRINQ portfolios. Generally, Capstone reflection assignments reveal evidence of this University Studies goal, but do not meet many of the requirements of the rubrics. Many of the reflections were short pieces of student writing which did not allow for an in depth exploration of the goal. The Capstone program is exploring other evidence it might use to assess student learning related to University Studies goals and expects to continue that work this year.

## University Studies 2007-2008 Assessment Report

### FRINQ ASSESSMENT

#### TOOLS AND METHODS

##### Prior Learning Survey

**Purpose:** The Prior Learning Survey asked about students' academic experiences prior to attending PSU, reasons for and concerns about attending college, and early college experiences and plans. The survey results provide information to individual faculty about their students and to the program about the overall preparation and needs of the incoming freshman class.

**Method:** During the first two weeks of Fall 2007, Freshman Inquiry students completed a Prior Learning Assessment. This on-line survey was administered during FRINQ mentor sessions. 1,276 students completed the survey for an 86% response rate.

##### FRINQ End-of-year Survey

**Purpose:** The FRINQ End-of-year Survey asked students to rate their experiences in their FRINQ course over the 2007-2008 academic year. Students responded to questions about the course format, faculty pedagogical practices, and mentor contribution to the course. The survey also asked about experiences with advising, comfort on campus and plans for the fall term. The results provide information to individual faculty about their course and to the program about students' overall experience in FRINQ.

**Method:** During the final three weeks of Spring term 2008, FRINQ students completed the End-of-year survey. This on-line survey was administered during mentor sessions. 741 students responded to the survey for a response rate of 64%.

##### FRINQ Portfolio Review

**Purpose:** The FRINQ Portfolio Review process scores student portfolios against rubrics developed to measure student learning related to University Studies goals. The results provide information to faculty teams about student learning in FRINQ themes and to students' overall learning in FRINQ.

**Method:** Over the course of FRINQ courses, students develop portfolios representing their work and reflection relating to the four University Studies goals. During Spring 2008, students were asked for permission to evaluate their portfolios as part of program assessment for University Studies. 678 of 1157 (58.5%) students returned consent forms and 469 (69.2%) of those returning forms gave consent. Of these, 210 student portfolios were randomly selected for review representing 30 portfolios for each of the seven FRINQ themes. When electronic portfolios with bad URLs were excluded, we ended up reviewing 196 portfolios. This year, the portfolio review process focused on

the Critical Thinking goal and the Ethics and Social Responsibility goal. Each goal was assessed using a 6-point rubric, where 6 is a score expected of a graduating senior. In addition to using the rubrics, each portfolio was assessed against a checklist developed to provide information about the types of assignments included in student portfolios. Inter-rater reliability for the Ethics and Social Responsibility rubric was 86% and for Critical Thinking rubric it was 81%.

## ASSESSMENT DATA

### FRINQ End-of-year Survey

**In the FRINQ course students had the opportunity to...**

*Ratings made on a scale of 1=Strongly disagree to 5=Strongly Agree.*

	06-07		07-08	
	N = 667		N = 741	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Apply course material to improve critical thinking	3.95	0.87	4.05	.89
Acquire skills in working with others as a member of a team	4.01	0.87	4.07	.87
Explore issues of diversity such as race; class; gender; sexual orientation; ethnicity	4.11	0.90	4.13	.91
Develop skills in expressing myself orally.	3.74	0.95	3.86	.94
Develop skills in expressing myself in writing	3.98	0.89	4.08	.91
Learn how to find and use resources for answering or solving problems	3.81	0.91	3.93	.89
Learn to analyze and critically evaluate ideas; arguments and multiple points of view	3.97	0.88	4.08	.91
Explore ethical issues	4.04	0.89	.409	.98

**The FRINQ Faculty...**

*Ratings made on a scale of 1=Strongly disagree to 5=Strongly Agree.*

	06-07		07-08	
	N = 667		N = 741	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Displayed a personal interest in students and their learning	4.01	0.99	4.09	.98
Scheduled course work (class activities; tests; projects) in ways which encouraged students to stay up to date in their work.	3.63	1.12	3.83	1.01

Formed "teams" or "discussion groups" to facilitate learning.	3.91	0.97	4.05	.90
Made it clear how each topic fit into the course.	3.55	1.14	3.69	1.12
Explained course material clearly and concisely.	3.51	1.18	3.65	1.13
Related course material to real life situations	3.78	1.04	3.90	1.03
Inspired students to set and achieve goals which really challenged them.	3.50	1.07	3.69	1.09
Asked students to share ideas and experiences with others whose backgrounds and viewpoints differ from their own.	3.90	1.00	4.01	.99
Provided timely and frequent feedback on test; reports; projects; etc. to help students improve.	3.71	1.06	3.86	1.05
Encouraged student-faculty interaction outside of class (office visits; phone calls; e-mail; etc.)	3.82	0.98	3.91	1.01
Used a variety of methods-papers; presentations; class projects; exams; etc.- to evaluate student progress.	3.98	0.94	4.09	.93

### FRINQ Portfolio Review

#### Mean Portfolio Scores

	Academic Year					
	2002-2003		2005-2006		2007-2008	
	N =150		N = 198		N = 196	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
<i>University Studies Goal</i>						
Critical Thinking	3.10	.70	3.0	0.9	2.89	0.82
Ethics and Social Responsibility	2.53	.85	2.8	1.0	2.44	0.87

#### Percentage of portfolios that included:

	06-07		07-08	
	<i>N</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<i>General Portfolio Evidence</i>				
Personal Narrative	177	87.2	180	95.2
Analytical Writing	179	88.2	167	87.9
Creative Writing	62	30.5	66	33.7
Research Paper	*		116	59.2
Graphs and/or charts	*		89	48.1
Assignment Instructions	39	19.2	79	41.6
Evidence of a First Draft	17	8.4	65	34.4
Appropriate use of grammar throughout	153	75.4	157	83.5

<i>Evidence Related to Ethics and Social Responsibility</i>				
Ethical Scenarios	*		120	64.2
Connection between issue and personal choices	*		105	55.9
Identification of specific social issue	*		137	75.7
Research paper	*		67	35.8
PowerPoint	*		15	8.1
Critical Essay	*		117	61.9
Statistical analysis	*		29	15.4
<i>Evidence Related to Critical Thinking</i>				
States own position	*		166	88.3
Identifies and examines multiple positions	*		79	43.4
Provides outside evidence in support of positions	*		113	61.1
Evaluates multiple positions in a coherent argument	*		41	22.4
Research paper	*		80	42.3
PowerPoint	*		25	13.1
Critical essay	*		110	58.2
Statistical Analysis	*		52	27.4
Informal writing or response paper	*		112	59.9

\* Not collected in 06-07

## FINDINGS

### Prior Learning Assessment

#### **Student Profile**

- Women represent a larger proportion of the FRINQ students than men (52.7% and 47.3%, respectively).
- Students enrolled in FRINQ are predominantly Caucasian (65.8%); the largest group other than Caucasian students were Asian/Pacific Islanders (12.6%).
- When asked about their primary activity the year before attending PSU, 79.4% of students reported they were attending high school.
- Consistent with previous years, almost half of students enrolled in FRINQ (46.7%) are first-generation college students.

#### **Student Rating of Academic Skills**

- Students gave their highest ratings to their interpersonal skills including working collaboratively as part of a team and working effectively with others who are different than themselves (3.73 and 3.68 out of 5, respectively).
- Students were less positive about their ability to generate theses for writing assignments, use quantitative reasoning, or use proper citations. All of these skills were rated below average (2.81, 2.83 and 2.91, respectively).
- Students reported that, on average, they had used quantitative reasoning and discussed social problems more frequently than other academic skills over the last two years.
- Students reported that they integrated multiple viewpoints into an assignment and completed multiple drafts of assignments the least frequently.

#### **Education Plan**

- 77.5% of students indicated that their immediate plans were to earn their bachelors degree from PSU. This is an increase over the percent who reported an intention to earn a Bachelor's degree from PSU in the last two years. In 2007, a smaller proportion of students

(6.2%) reported intending to transfer than in 2006 or 2005 (7.5% and 8.9%, respectively) and more students were not sure of their plans (13.2%) than in previous years (8.2% and 9.0%, respectively). Students reported planning to enroll full time during this year, with an average of 14.2 credits.

### **FRINQ End-of-year Survey**

- In general, students agreed that they had the opportunities to address all four of the University Studies goals in their FRINQ courses. Means on these items ranged from 3.74 to 4.11 on a 5-point agreement scale. When looking at the percentage of students that agreed or strongly agreed with those items, over two-thirds of students agreed or strongly agreed with each item. For all items, mean scores increased from the 06-07 school year to the 07-08 school year.
- Students also generally agreed with statements about their faculty members' teaching practices. All items had means above 3.0 on a 5-point scale. Students were most likely to agree that faculty expressed a personal interest in their learning ( $M = 4.01$ ) and used a variety of methods to evaluate student progress ( $M = 3.98$ ). Students were less likely to agree that faculty inspired them to set and achieve challenging goals ( $M = 3.51$ ), explained course material clearly and concisely ( $M = 3.51$ ) or made it clear how each topic fit into the course ( $M = 3.55$ ).

### **FRINQ Portfolio Review**

#### **Rubric**

- Over the last three reviews, the mean Ethics and Social Responsibility score was consistently between 2 and 3 on a 6-point scale. Mean Ethics scores across the seven FRINQ teams ranged from 2.27 to 2.75.
- Over the last three reviews, the mean Critical Thinking score was consistently around 3 on a 6-point scale. Mean Critical Thinking scores across the seven themes ranged from 2.42 to 3.14.

#### **Checklist**

- Over 90% of students included evidence of personal narrative (95%) and over 80% included analytical writing and used appropriate grammar in their portfolios (87.9% and 83.5%, respectively). About half of students included research papers and graphs and charts in their portfolios (59.2% and 48.1%, respectively). While fewer students included evidence of a first draft or assignment instructions (34.4% and 41.6%, respectively) compared with portfolios in 07 (8.4% and 19.2%, respectively), more students this year included those items.
- When reviewing evidence related to Ethics and Social responsibility, most students included ethical scenarios (64.2%), identified specific social issues (75.7%) and made connections between issues and personal choices (55.9%). Critical essay was the most frequently included piece of evidence in the Ethics and Social Responsibility section of the portfolio (61.9%) and PowerPoint presentations and statistical analyses were included by far fewer students (8.1% and 15.4%, respectively).
- Related to Critical Thinking, most students included statements of their own positions (88.3%) and outside evidence to support their positions (61.1%). Fewer students provided evidence of identifying multiple positions and (43.4%) and evaluating those positions in a coherent argument (22.4%). The most frequently included types of evidence of Critical Thinking were the critical essay (58.2%) and informal response papers (59.9%). Again

PowerPoint presentations and statistical analyses were the least frequently included type of evidence for Critical Thinking (13.1% and 27.4%, respectively).

## REFLECTION

- This year, the University Studies program connected data from the Prior Learning Survey, the PSU data warehouse, End of year survey and portfolio review data to create a more complete data set through which to examine student success and retention. Analysis of that data is ongoing and will result in further research reports specifically related to retention.

## University Studies 2007-2008 Assessment Report

### SINQ ASSESSMENT

#### TOOLS AND METHODS

##### SINQ End-of-term Survey

**Purpose:** The SINQ End-of-term Survey asked students to rate their experiences in their SINQ course. Students responded to questions about the course format, faculty pedagogical practices, and mentor contribution to the course. The results provide information to individual faculty about their course and to the program about students' overall experience in SINQ.

**Method:** During the final three weeks of each term during 2007, SINQ students completed the End-of-term survey. This on-line survey was administered during mentor sessions. 2875 students responded to the survey. The survey was re-designed this year to more closely reflect the program's expectations for SINQ faculty. Some items were removed and items relating to course objectives and student engagement were added to the faculty section of the survey.

##### SINQ Student Work Sample Review

**Purpose:** The University Studies program is interested in evaluating student learning related to program goals at all levels of the program. This year, a pilot project was conducted to determine whether student work that is already being produced in Sophomore Inquiry courses is appropriate for evaluation using existing University Studies rubrics.

**Method:** SINQ faculty volunteers asked students to allow University Studies to assess an assignment from their course. Faculty submitted 34 student work samples for review, 27 of which were related to the Critical Thinking goal and the remaining 7 related to the Ethics and Social Responsibility goal. These work samples were evaluated using the University Studies rubrics during the annual portfolio review process. Each goal was assessed using a 6-point rubric.

#### ASSESSMENT DATA

##### SINQ End-of-term Survey

##### **The Sophomore Inquiry *Learning Experience***

*Ratings made on a scale of 1=Strongly disagree to 5=Strongly Agree.*

	06-07	07-08
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	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev
The course provided opportunities to learn to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments and multiple points of view	4.03	0.950	4.15	.93
The course provided opportunities to develop skills in working with others as a member of a team	3.90	0.970	3.87	1.04
The course provided opportunities to explore issues of diversity such as race; class; gender; sexual orientation; ethnicity	3.95	1.075	3.95	1.08
The course provided opportunities to develop skills in expressing myself orally.	3.73	1.005	3.84*	1.03
The course provided opportunities to develop skills in expressing myself in writing.	3.93	0.964	4.02*	.97
The course provided opportunities to explore ethical issues and dilemmas	4.01	1.000	4.06	.98
It was clear how the work from the mentor session connected to the overall course.	3.85	1.11	3.83	1.12
I understand how this course fits into my PSU general education requirements			3.79	1.17
Overall, I was satisfied with my experience in this class.			3.88	1.13

\* 07-08 score differs significantly from the 06-07 score,  $p < .05$

### The SINQ Faculty...

Ratings made on a scale of 1=Strongly disagree to 5=Strongly Agree.

	06-07		07-08	
	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev
Displayed a personal interest in students and their learning	4.13	.965	3.99*	1.01
Scheduled course work (class activities; tests; projects) in ways which encouraged students to stay up to date in their work.	3.92	1.057	3.95	1.03
Provided timely and frequent feedback on test; reports; projects; etc. to help students improve.	3.75	1.100	3.79	1.11
Used a variety of methods-papers; presentations; class projects; exams;	3.98	0.990	3.89*	1.04

etc.- to evaluate student progress.				
Clearly stated the learning objectives for the overall course	n/a		3.95	1.03
Clearly stated the criteria for grading	n/a		3.81	1.12
Created an atmosphere that encouraged active student participation.	n/a		4.08	1.03
Used activities and assignments that allowed me to feel personally engaged in my learning.	n/a		3.93	1.05

\* 07-08 score differs significantly from the 06-07 score,  $p < .05$

### The SINQ Mentor...

Ratings made on a scale of 1=Strongly disagree to 5=Strongly Agree.

	06-07		07-08	
	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev
Displayed a personal interest in students and their learning	4.26	.83	4.17*	.93
Provided opportunities to help me complete assignments successfully.	4.13	.89	4.17	.93
Clearly stated expectations of students in mentor session.	n/a		4.11	.97
Helped me understand the resources available to me at PSU.	n/a		4.00	1.03
Clearly stated the learning objectives for the mentor session	n/a		4.05	.99
Created an atmosphere that encouraged active student participation.	n/a		4.28	.90
Used activities and assignments that allowed me to feel personally engaged in my learning.	n/a		4.01	1.04

\* 07-08 score differs significantly from the 06-07 score,  $p < .05$

### Percentage of SINQ courses where students agreed or strongly agreed that...

	Less than 1/2 Students	1/2 to 3/4 of Students	3/4 to All Students
The course provided opportunities to learn to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments and multiple points of view	6.2	16.2	77.7

The course provided opportunities to develop skills in working with others as a member of a team	23.1	17.7	<b>59.2</b>
The course provided opportunities to explore issues of diversity such as race; class; gender; sexual orientation; ethnicity	22.3	22.3	<b>55.4</b>
The course provided opportunities to develop skills in expressing myself orally.	18.5	38.5	<b>43.1</b>
The course provided opportunities to develop skills in expressing myself in writing.	4.6	32.3	<b>63.1</b>
The course provided opportunities to explore ethical issues and dilemmas	9.2	26.2	<b>64.6</b>
It was clear how the work from the mentor session connected to the overall course.	18.5	36.2	<b>45.4</b>
I understand how this course fits into my PSU general education requirements	11.5	51.5	<b>36.9</b>
Overall, I was satisfied with my experience in this class.	13.8	36.2	<b>50.0</b>

**Percentage of SINQ courses where students agreed or strongly agreed that the faculty member...**

	Less than ½ Students	½ to ¾ of Students	¾ to All Students
Displayed a personal interest in students and their learning	8.5	33.1	<b>58.5</b>
Scheduled course work (class activities; tests; projects) in ways which encouraged students to stay up to date in their work.	8.5	38.5	<b>53.1</b>
Provided timely and frequent feedback on test; reports; projects; etc. to help students improve.	20.8	32.3	<b>46.9</b>
Used a variety of methods-papers; presentations; class projects; exams; etc.- to evaluate student progress.	14.6	32.3	<b>53.1</b>
Clearly stated the learning objectives for the overall course	10.8	33.8	<b>55.4</b>
Clearly stated the criteria for grading	20.0	36.9	<b>43.1</b>
Created an atmosphere that encouraged active student participation.	10.8	24.6	<b>64.6</b>
Used activities and assignments that allowed me to feel personally engaged	11.5	36.9	<b>51.5</b>

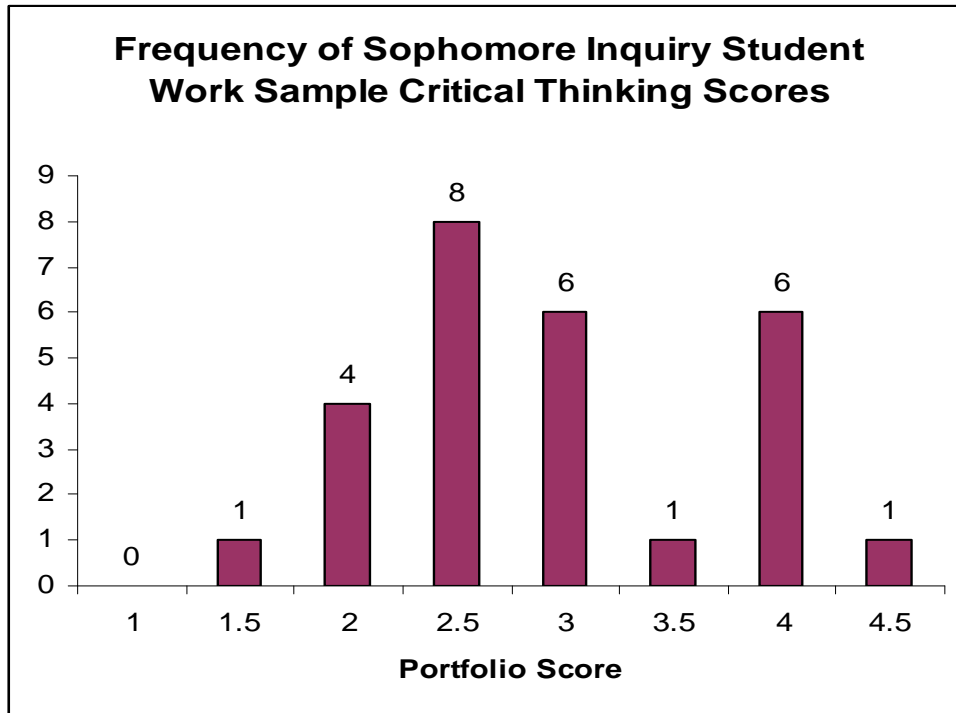
in my learning.			
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**Percentage of SINQ courses where students agreed or strongly agreed that the mentor ...**

	Less than 1/2 Students	1/2 to 3/4 of Students	3/4 to All Students
Displayed a personal interest in students and their learning	2.3	20.8	<b>76.2</b>
Provided opportunities to help me complete assignments successfully.	3.1	20.8	<b>76.2</b>
Clearly stated expectations of students in mentor session.	4.6	30.8	<b>64.6</b>
Helped me understand the resources available to me at PSU.	9.2	41.5	<b>49.2</b>
Clearly stated the learning objectives for the mentor session	3.1	38.5	<b>58.5</b>
Created an atmosphere that encouraged active student participation.	1.5	16.9	<b>81.5</b>
Used activities and assignments that allowed me to feel personally engaged in my learning.	6.2	37.7	<b>56.2</b>

**SINQ Student Work Sample Review**

The mean score for Sophomore Inquiry student work samples using the current 6-point critical thinking rubric was 2.9. The chart below reflects the frequencies of each score on the rubric. The scores clustered between 2 and 3 with several work samples also earning a score of 4 (see table below). For the Ethics and Social Responsibility rubric, scores ranged between 2.5 and 6 with a mean of 3.5. Because there were only a small number of work samples for each rubric, the data should not be considered representative of all Sophomore work in SINQ courses.



## FINDINGS

### SINQ End-of-term Survey

- In general, students agreed that they had the opportunities to address all four of the University Studies goals in their SINQ courses. Means on these items ranged from 3.84 to 4.15 on a 5-point agreement scale. Compared to 06-07, SINQ students in 07-08 had higher mean ratings on items related to the critical thinking and communication goals. When looking at the percentage of students that agreed or strongly agreed with the ‘goal’ items, over two-thirds of students agreed or strongly agreed with each item.
- Students also generally agreed with statements about their faculty members’ teaching practices. All items had means above 3.7 on a 5-point scale. Students were most likely to agree that faculty created an atmosphere that encouraged active participation ( $M = 4.08$ ). Compared to 06-07, students in 07-08 were less likely to agree that faculty displayed a personal interest in their learning and used a variety of methods to evaluate student progress.

## REFLECTION

### SINQ End-of-term Survey

One of our assessment goals for the previous year was to increase the usefulness of the student end-of-term evaluation data by revising some of the questions to better align them with our overall programmatic expectations and objectives. These results suggest that potential areas for improvement lie in helping students understand how their SINQ course fits into their PSU general education program and making it clear to them how the work in the mentor sessions connects to the overall course. Based on these results, one of our emphases for 08 – 09 will be supporting faculty/mentor pairs to more intentionally integrate mentor sessions into the overall course structure.

## **SINQ Student Work Sample Review**

The student work samples for this evaluation included both formal papers and reading response questions. Consensus from evaluators was that the reading response papers did not provide enough evidence to make a confident score. The responses tended to be short and did not display the depth of analysis found in the longer papers. With the more formal research or critical analysis papers, evaluators felt more confident in their ability to apply an appropriate score.

## **University Studies 2007-2008 Assessment Report**

### **CAPSTONE ASSESSMENT**

#### **TOOLS AND METHODS**

##### **Capstone Student Experience Survey - Quantitative**

**Purpose:** The Capstone Student Experience Survey asked about students' experiences in UNST Capstone courses as well as instructor pedagogical approaches and course topics. The survey results provide information to individual faculty about their courses and to the program about the overall student experience in Capstones.

**Method:** Students enrolled in Capstone courses complete paper-based course evaluations in class at the end of their course. During the 2007-2008 academic year, 2258 students completed surveys.

##### **Capstone Student Experience Survey – Qualitative**

The **final course evaluation** asks two primary questions: what was your most important learning and what could be improved in the course? 200 comments were randomly selected out of the 2258 surveys collected to assess students' learnings and suggestions for Capstones. Two separate readers employed Creswell's (1994) qualitative analysis method to determine and confirm the findings.

##### **Qualitative Data Gathered through In-Class Small Group Inventory Diagnostic (SGID)**

**Purpose:** Each year the Capstone Office analyzes the comments from the mid-term qualitative feedback sessions. The data is primarily used to provide feedback to instructors so that the course can be improved. The Capstone Office also uses the results to identify common themes and areas for faculty development.

**Method:** 42 in-class qualitative mid-quarter assessments were conducted this year by 4 trained PSU faculty facilitators. Janelle Voegele (CAE) and Vicki Reitenauer (UNST) conducted the majority of assessments. The assessments were then analyzed by the Capstone Program Director who confirmed findings with the facilitators to make sure her understandings of the data were correct.

The SGID process involves a facilitator going into a Capstone classroom without the faculty present to ask students:

**(1) What about this course is helping you to learn the course material and do your community work?**

**(2) What could be changed to improve the course?**

The data is written down by the facilitators and then transcribed, sent to the faculty, and to the Capstone Program Director. The facilitator and the faculty then have a follow up 1:1 meeting to discuss possible mid-course alterations to improve the quality of the course.

### **Capstone Student Work Sample Review**

**Purpose:** Following an examination of Capstone student final projects last year, the Capstone program continued its work on assessing student learning this year through an analysis of student reflection papers. The analysis of student work samples was conducted to determine whether the types of reflective assignments students produce in Capstones are appropriate evidence of student learning related to University Studies goals. Capstone courses incorporate the four University Studies Goals (CT, AP, SR, C) into a community-based collaborative learning environment offering students a more holistic approach to recognizing and understanding their role as active, engaged citizens. The evaluation of Capstone student work samples sought to answer the following questions: Are students recognizing this connection? What can we really surmise about these learning communities? What meaning are our students making of their capstone experience? What evidence can we find to support that our students are conceptualizing, recognizing, or making personal connections with these goals? And, how best do we assess these student-learning outcomes?

**Method:** Capstone faculty volunteers asked students to respond to a reflection question about how they connected the University Studies goal of ethics and social responsibility to their learning in their Capstone course. Faculty submitted 49 student work samples for review. These work samples were evaluated using the University Studies Ethics and Social Responsibility rubric during the annual portfolio review process. This goal was assessed using a 6-point rubric.

### **ASSESSMENT DATA**

#### **Capstone Student Experiences Questionnaire - Quantitative**

##### **2007-2008 Capstone Course Evaluations**

<b>Capstone Learning Experience</b>	<b>05-06</b>	<b>06-07</b>	<b>07-08</b>
The community work I did helped me to better understand the course content in this Capstone.	4.28	4.39*	4.43
I feel that the community work I did through this course benefited the community.	4.27	4.36*	4.42*
I felt a personal responsibility to meet the needs of the community partner of this course.	4.15	4.36*	4.40
I was already volunteering in the community before taking this course.	3.12	3.02	3.05
I improved my ability to solve problems in this course	3.83	3.84	3.91*
My participation in this Capstone helped me to connect what I learned to real life situations.	4.14	4.33*	4.33
This course enhanced my communication skills (writing, public speaking, etc.).	3.96	4.00	4.00
This course helped me understand others who are different from me.	4.23	4.29*	4.29
This course enhanced my ability to work with others in a team.	4.07	4.09	4.12
This course explored issues of diversity (such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation).	4.13	4.26*	4.23
In this course I improved my ability to analyze views from multiple viewpoints.	4.14	4.20	4.17

I will continue to volunteer or participate in the community after this course.	4.00	3.98	3.99
The syllabus clearly described how the course content connected to the community work.	4.05	4.26*	4.26
I believe this course deepened my understanding of political issues.	3.92	3.81*	3.76
I believe this course deepened my understanding of local social issues.	4.24	4.26	4.29
I now have a better understanding of how to make a difference in my community.	4.15	4.25*	4.19*
I had the opportunity to apply skills and knowledge gained from my major.	n/a	n/a	3.93
I had the opportunity to engage with students from different fields of specialization	n/a	n/a	4.51

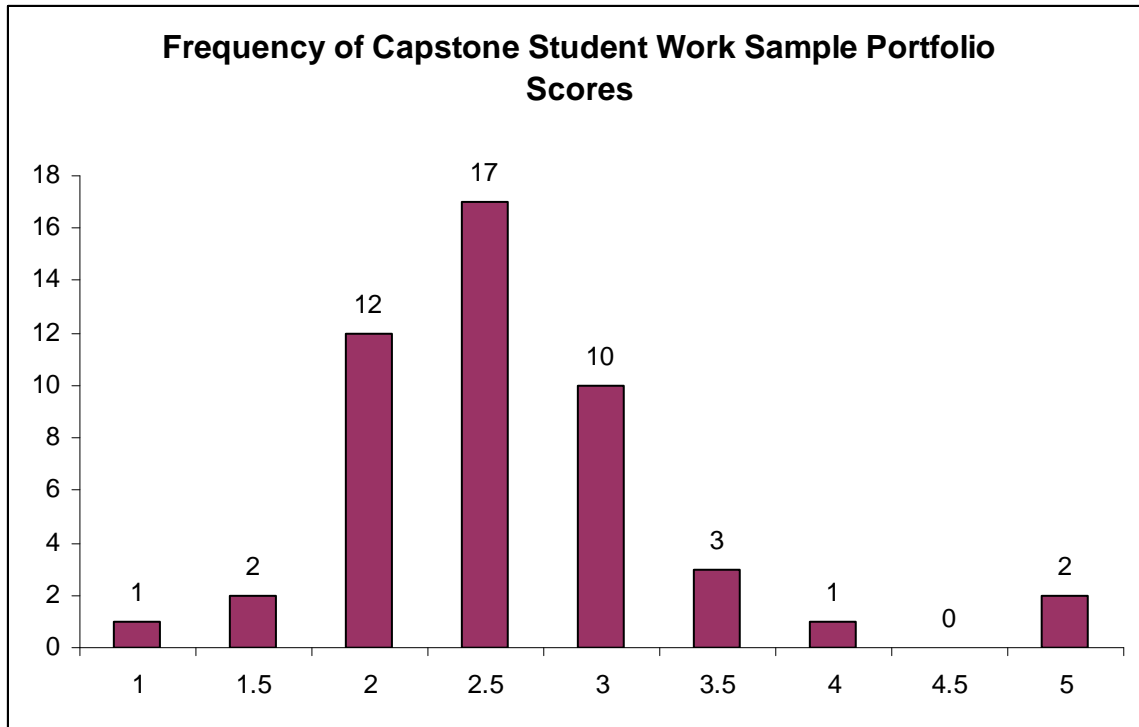
\* The score is significantly different than the score for the previous year,  $p < .05$

<b>Course design question: Within your Capstone, what forms of learning did the instructor use?</b>	<b>05-06</b>	<b>06-07</b>	<b>07-08</b>
Reflective journals	76.0%	79.1%	75.7%
Required class attendance	80.8%	80.6%	81.5%
Collaborative projects	82.7%	82.4%	74.3%
Readings on racial and ethnic issues	51.7%	59.4%	53.9%
Extensive lecturing	20.7%	18.4%	17.3%
Readings on women and gender issues	34.3%	40.8%	40.2%
Group decision-making	82.0%	80.4%	78.6%
Readings on civic responsibility	61.5%	67.8%	69.3%
Student presentations	72.6%	71.4%	73.4%
Discussions on political issues	52.7%	55.3%	51.8%
Discussions on social issues	77.7%	83%	83.45%
Class discussions	89.5%	88.1%	79.2%
Exams	3.8%	3.0%	4.1%
Final exam	3.9%	2.6%	n/a
WebCt or blackboard	31.4%	42.2%	58.5%
Portfolio	20.0%	19.5%	16.4%
Discussions on ethical issues	40.4%	58.2%	n/a

### **Capstone Student Work Sample Review**

The mean score for Capstone student work samples using the current 6-point Ethics and Social Responsibility rubric was 2.6. The chart below reflects the frequencies of each score on the rubric. The scores clustered between 2 and 3 with only two work samples earning a score of 5.





## FINDINGS

### Capstone Student Experiences Questionnaire – Quantitative

- When compared with data from previous years, Capstone students continue to agree that their courses emphasize the university studies goals and help them become aware of and committed to community issues.
- Specifically when compared to data from the 06-07 academic year, students in 07-08 were more likely to agree that the community service component helped them understand the course content, and that they had improved their ability to solve problems. Students in 07-08 had a slightly lower rating on the item that asked whether they now had a better understanding of how to make a difference in the community. The mean score, however, was still above 4 on a 5-point scale.
- Students also reported on pedagogical techniques used and course topics covered in capstone. With few exceptions, the percentage of students reporting the use of particular techniques remained stable or increased. There was a decrease in the use of extensive lecturing, collaborative projects and class discussion. Students reported that more faculty used electronic course management tools such as Blackboard.

### Capstone Student Experiences Questionnaire – Qualitative

Nine themes emerged detailing students' **most important learning** (in order of frequency). Out of 200 surveys, there were 226 comments. Some students wrote more than one response.

1. Insights regarding being involved in the community (“real world”, “hands on”). (62 responses).

2. Application of theory (or course content) to practice. Students reported on the learnings they gained from the readings, discussions, assignments and linking those learnings to their community project. (36 responses)
3. Effectiveness of faculty (modeling effective facilitation, communication, problem solving) (29)
4. Enhanced understanding of self (personal growth, impact on self) (17)
5. New skills and insights from working in groups with interdisciplinary peers (17)
6. Deepen understanding of social and political (13)
7. Insights about diverse populations (11)
8. Importance of volunteering, social responsibility, and impact on the community (12)
9. Ability to collaborate with peers (group work) (7)
- Loved whole experience, best class (5)
- Misc (17)

Five themes emerged detailing students' **suggestions for changes** in the course (in order of frequency). Out of 200 surveys 213 comments were recorded. Some students wrote more than one comment.

1. No suggestions for improvement (90).

It should be noted here that although the question asked for suggestions for changes 40 of the 90 "no suggestions" included compliments of "great, fabulous class.." and 6 included compliments toward the instructor specifically.

2. Feedback on course assignments, organization, and content of the course (56)
3. Feedback on the TIME required to complete the Capstone project (20)
4. Feedback on Readings (15)
5. Feedback on working with and/or communicating with the community partner. (8)
- Misc. comments (included specifics to the logistics or location of the course) (24)

### **Qualitative Data Gathered through In-Class Small Group Inventory Diagnostic (SGID)**

**The 5 most common themes to question one regarding what is helping student learning were:**

- 1) Feedback from faculty (guidance, availability, support, inspiration, individual meetings, feedback on assignments)
- 2) Experience in the community (directly working with community partner and population in the community).
- 3) Classroom Discussions (interactive discussions, small class size)
- 4) Readings (texts, readers, articles)
- 5) On-line resources (Web CT, Blackboard) used for a variety of purposes (discussions, tutoring tips, course content).

**The five most common themes to the second question regarding what could be improved:**

- 1) More specific guidelines regarding final project (including timelines)
- 2) More explicit grading criteria
- 3) Suggestions regarding better space for classroom environment

- 4) Suggestions regarding specific community partnerships
- 5) Specific suggestions around assignments or texts

## **REFLECTION**

### **Capstone Student Experiences Questionnaire – Quantitative**

The stability of the high scores found in such a wide breadth of Capstone course offerings is remarkable. We had hoped to maintain this level of consistency in the scores by maintaining stability in the Capstone courses we offer, the faculty teaching in our program, and continuity in our community partnerships. The Capstone Office is pleased to see that the Capstone review process which approves new capstones continues to take seriously the importance of University Studies goals and the pedagogies employed to reach those goals. Through the use of a rigorous Capstone review process and faculty development efforts including a standardized 1:1 Capstone orientation done by CAE we are able to maintain quality even as we develop new course offerings to meet the interests of our students, faculty, and community partners.

This was the first year that the Capstone course evaluation asked students if they had the opportunity to apply skills and knowledge gained from my major. The score of 3.93 is a good starting benchmark score for this component of the Capstone. The Capstone Office plans to work with a couple of departments in 08-09 to pilot courses specifically designed to help students apply skills and knowledge from their major. We anticipate higher scores on that measure from these pilot courses and hope to learn how to increase the scores on this item while maintaining high scores related to the University Studies goals.

### **Capstone Student Experiences Questionnaire – Qualitative**

Students' responses on their most important learning highlight the essence of what the Capstone program was designed to accomplish. Students remarked on the learning that took place in the community and how it helped them deepen their learning of theory by applying knowledge in the community. They commented on the power of faculty modeling exemplary facilitation in the classroom and linked this to learning around the UNST goals of communication and collaborative learning. Students did not express coherent areas for improvement for Capstones as a whole, but rather either provided praise for the Capstone program, or gave very specific course-related suggestions around the structure of their specific course, time involved in specific projects, suggestions around readings, and interactions with individual community partners. Therefore, the Capstone Office uses this data to work with faculty 1:1 to address course-specific concerns.

### **Qualitative Data Gathered through In-Class Small Group Inventory Diagnostic (SGID)**

The SGID process plays a critical role in the assessment of Capstone because as it serves as our only standardized *formative* assessment tool. It allows faculty to hear the lived- experience of students and educates them about what is helping the students and what could be improved. It allows faculty to engage in a dialogue with students to respond to their concerns by providing clearer guidelines and timelines for Capstone final projects (or developing those guidelines and timelines collaboratively with students). It allows the faculty an opportunity to strengthen community partnerships and help clarify questions, concerns, roles or logistics. It has served as a powerful means to continuously improve the quality of Capstone courses.

### **Capstone Student Work Sample Review**

After reviewing the assessment data, we can surmise that these student reflection pieces by themselves are not a complete source of data to learn about student connections to the University

Studies Goals. There are several reasons that these reflection papers are not adequate indicators of student learning outcomes:

- The questions in the assignments do not specifically ask students to address the skills defined in the rubric.
- The student writing samples are written for a different audience.
- Course content/emphasis is geared more or less toward a particular goal. For example, a course emphasizing corporate responsibility may introduce the idea of ethical or social responsibility more directly than a course with an emphasis on the environment or youth development.
- The length of the assignment may have a direct effect on the length and depth of the response. Some of the reflections were very short making it difficult to determine a score. Student level of interest/motivation/drive and personal or professional obligations (time constraints) may also effect the length and depth of the response.
- This assignment does not include the whole capstone experience. The Rubric was developed to assess Frinq portfolios, an assignment that is developed over the course of one year and includes a variety of work samples. For this analysis, we reviewed one reflective writing assignment.

It is clear that more work needs to be done to assess Capstone student connections to the University Studies Goals. We propose that a more thorough look into connected assignments would be the next viable step. The following are our suggestion for further exploration:

- Examine syllabi to find common assignments across several Capstones
- Some Capstones use portfolios. Determine whether those portfolios with a connected individual reflection assignment would better represent student learning.
- Consider a reflective assignment with the group project as a portfolio-type work sample.
- Journal questions or writing assignment geared specifically to connect experiential learning with the outcomes identified in the rubric